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Gerald J. Elbert

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The DRUMS *of* AULONE

Novels by Robert W. Chambers

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The DRUMS *of* AULONE



ROBERT W. CHAMBERS



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CHAPTER I

TWO of the hounds—I could not see which they were—turned to the right through a thicket of hazel bushes and went down hill.

I pulled in my horse, but Hastur was sounding “Game afoot!” The rest of the pack passed like an avalanche, not giving tongue. My father arriving at a gallop called across the woodland to me: “Those two pups must be crazy. Let them go to the devil, Roussette!”

“They’re giving tongue!” I cried; but he swept on with the pack, making me a gesture to follow. Hastur’s distant horn was still sounding; two piqueurs came galloping. These were Piriou Louis, and Jacques, and they grinned politely at me—old huntsmen who loved me well, yet who cherished a sly woodland malice for my youth and inexperience.

“Lionne’s two crazy pups!” called out old Piriou Louis —“let them run, Mademoiselle!”

“They are baying something down by the river!” I cried excitedly; “listen, Sieur Piriou—”

“A hare—” His wind-blown laughter came back through yellowing woods; but at the same time I heard the distant uproar break out again below. Such frantic hound-music could not be mistaken, I thought; and I spurred down the slope through chestnut woods, straight toward the ravine where runs our little river Ombre.

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Now, as I rode, in the soft ground where springs made the black earth wet, I saw mud all furrowed and hatched and cut up where wild boar had passed. Here was no sounder, but well grown boar; and it seemed to me that in the trampled soil I could distinguish the imprint of a beast far larger and heavier than the boar which Hastur had marked down and reported last evening, and which we had been following.

I could hear the hysterical music of Lionne's pups from a heavy thicket of juniper close to the little river.

As I rode up the mass of branches became violently agitated and the bitch, Lionetta, ran out as though bewildered. There was blood on her, and her tail dragged, but I snatched from my head the soft leather cap with its violet plume and waved her back, cheering her in again.

"Oh, Heaven," I thought, "only for a piqueur!"—I already knowing there was a great boar in the juniper because the rank taint of him filled my nostrils.

Lionne's pups were baying him wildly now. Two or three times they came out, poor things, to seek countenance from me, but Lionne's blood told, and they rushed back again when I swung my hat.

What to do by grace of God—I did not know. I had no horn to sound, "At bay." My father always warned me against a boar in the juniper. But how could I leave those pups or cheer them in when I myself feared to go? No, that were too cowardly, and I could not endure to skulk outside any longer.

I thought Mogul, my horse, would stand, but was not sure. However, I took the chance, got out of the saddle, and went into the junipers holding firmly to my short heavy-bladed boar-spear, frightened, but unable to desert the dogs.

Presently, while advancing, shoulder deep in juniper,

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I thought I saw something gray and huge. There were big gray rocks along the river, too, but this grayish mass moved. And now I caught glimpses of my two dogs, circling very wide of the fearsome creature, nor venturing within sweep of his sabre-keen tusks.

This was madness. The whole pack indeed would have been none too many to hold such a monster for a spear thrust. I must have gone as crazy as the pups to have thrust myself into such a hopeless and dangerous position.

But there is a God for fools and children—I was only fifteen years old—and our dear Lady of Ombre must have looked with real pity upon a child and two pups who had come so gaily into the junipers to play with death.

Now I could see that enormous, shaggy beast very plainly standing all bunched up and dangerous in a corner of the rocks. He had not run far; he was not tired at all; he stood sulkily facing the dogs with an air of ennui, but his silver-gray bristles were ridged high, and now and then he clattered his tusks like castanettes and his little eyes glowered red as rubies.

Had he seen me no doubt he would have charged; but the eye-sight of a wild boar is dim and short; his ears and nose alone tell him where lies danger, and where to slay his enemy; and the wind blew from him to me, rank with the wild stench of him.

As I braced my short heavy blade, not knowing what else to do, suddenly the bitch, Lionetta, made a rush at the monster and got his great furry ear between her teeth.

Instantly he swung his enormous head, sent her flying, and yelping; then quick as a cat he turned and plunged into the river; and was across and running through the pines as swift as a spotted deer.

As for me, though now I was horribly afraid, I could

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not bear to leave him. The dogs were already after him. I ran, stumbling, to my horse, mounted, and rode down to the Ombre—where somehow Mogul floundered across with me—I losing my hat with its new violet-coloured plume—but I could not take time to rescue it, and rode on, my chestnut-red hair flying about my face. Fortunately it was cropped page-fashion and did not blind me.

But Oh, Mary Mother!—I would have given every hair of my head to have had a horn to sound the “Game Afoot!” and hear old Piriou Louis’ cheery sonnerie answering me through the autumn forest!

CHAPTER II

LIONETTA and Ferox were running hard, and I was galloping my horse a few yards behind them when we ran headlong into a sounder—Mary Mother!—such a squealing and plunging of little striped pigs! Up went Mogul on his hind legs as the huge furry sow ran at him and tried to bite him. We jumped clear over the furious monster, and she ran after Ferox and gave him a glancing bite;—it was no more than a pinch with her ugly teeth and a rip of the horny snout, but poor Ferox shrieked and the blood spurted.

At that I swung my horse around and, leaning far out of the saddle, fetched the sow a hearty whack with the flat of my blade, at the same time shouting to the dogs to get out of the way. All the woods seemed filled with the unearthly squalling and shrieking of piglings and sow, and hysterical noises from both dogs.

Lionetta ran after a striped pig and got him down in a filbert thicket, and would have murdered him had I not dismounted, and, dragging my horse behind me on a trot, kicked away the enraged dog.

The wretched striper got up and fled, screaming; and the sow, hearing the outrageous lament of her offspring rushed after him. The entire sounder followed while I, holding to my terrified horse, managed to beat off and drive back the two dogs who were determined to have their revenge on the pigs—being such fools that they did not know the sow would tear them to pieces if she came back.

Well we were in a most annoying plight—the pups all smeared with blood and mud and sticks and dead leaves;

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my horse gashed above the nigh fetlock but not badly, and I, in my lad's suit of soft leather embroidered with silver vines, hot, sweating, smeared with blood and lather.

When my horse would stand I coupled up the pups and dragged horse and dogs to the river where I washed Mogul's fetlock and attended to Lionetta and then to Ferox.

The tusks of a boar or the bite of a sow poison the wound they make. In my little leather wallet which I wore on a baldrick across my right shoulder, and to which, also, my body belt and knife were attached, I had a wooden flask of balsam which Piriou Louis used in the kennels and stables at home.

With this, after cleansing the gashes on horse and dog, I stopped the swollen wounds.

My excitement had ebbed leaving disgust and annoyance, because for my disobedience at least I had hoped to bring a fine boar to spear to save my dignity.

But now! Hastur, while showing me all the respect in the world, would make me feel my inexperience and stupidity; my father would throw back his handsome head—Mary Mother!—I seemed to hear his peals of laughter ringing through the forest. As for the piqueurs—all the delighted malice of two old servitors who adored and spoiled me would be slyly expressed in their too respectful assiduities— Oh, I should be made to understand what a little fool I had been.

Well, there was nothing further to be done until I could come up with the pack—if that now were possible.

I mounted and sat my saddle, listening; and heard nothing except the flow of winds through the high tree tops and the gurgle of the amber Ombre.

"Get up and follow!" I said crossly to the two dogs. They were already stiffening, but after we had proceeded

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for half a mile they became livelier again, and I had trouble to keep them in.

I did not know where I was excepting that of course I must be somewhere in our Forest of Maniscamp.

The gray boar that Hastur and Piriou Louis had marked the night before and which we had started this morning might be miles away, now.

Always listening, I could hear no distant baying of hounds, no far music of the hunting horns, no wind-blown shouts, no stirring anywhere in the forest except as my horse advanced over the dead leaves.

Again and again I drew bridle and called aloud, and sat listening. Only a lonely vanneau answered, passing somewhere overhead.

I seemed to find no roads, either—only here and there an erratic sentier made by game.

In my wallet I had a *pâté-de-sanglier* and a flask of our native golden wine. These I consumed at my ease as I rode, my spurred legs dangling out of the stirrups, the bridle lying on Mogul's neck. He knew no more than I where we were going, and I thought, maybe, if I let him have his head, he'd bring me somewhere into a road that I might recognize.

Having discussed my midday meal with an appetite—for I was a healthy girl and inherited my father's disposition to do whatever I did with all my heart and hardily—I whistled in both dogs who again were becoming too enterprising, and, raising my voice, sent a long clear haloo out through the forest. Not a sound in reply.

"Diable," thought I, "this is becoming tiresome, and I am well punished for my disobedience."

It was very certain that my horse was not taking me anywhere that I knew. Nothing around me seemed familiar. Little, dark streams ran down through oak

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and chestnut woods into swampy stretches intensely green where at intervals herons croaked.

I don't know what time it was but the sun had declined noticeably and shadows lengthened across the moss when, without any preliminary signs of it, my horse walked out into a grassy *carrefour*.

From it, in four directions, great wide rides radiated, deep with wild grasses and ferns. But, as far as I could see in any direction nothing stirred save innumerable rabbits, and a single deer—a roebuck who stood at gaze inspecting us.

It seemed to me that the ride which stretched away on my right hand ought to bring me back to Maniscamp-sur-Ombre—our smaller *château* where my father was now in residence because our regiment had gone into cantonments there while our stables and *château* at Aulone were being renovated and repaired. Also the boar hunting, this year, promised better in the Forest of Maniscamp than it seemed to in the Aulone woods.

My father and his Régiment d'Aulone had very recently returned from the Deux-Ponts campaign, whither I also had accompanied my father's head-quarters; and I had heard the cannon roar all day long, and had watched through a glass, the charge of Schomberg's cavalry.

That was over. We had the orders of Louvois to march to Maniscamp and go into cantonment for overhauling repairs, and recruitment pending another campaign concerning which not even a rumor had reached my father. But that was the way of Louvois, and of his master, our King, Louis XIV—the *Roi Soleil*. And of old Maintenon. . . . But, of these things, later by your leave, for I have much to tell you of my father and myself before I bring upon the stage these people who for so long have had the whole world by the throat.

CHAPTER III

NOW when at last I rode out of the Forest of Maniscamp into a rolling country golden with ripe grain it was far along in the afternoon.

The land ahead seemed like our domain of Maniscamp-sur-Ombre, yet I could not see the river nor the hill vineyards, nor was the highway familiar, nor any hedges nor crops nor other features of the landscape.

Over a little valley among low hills a brown smoke hung; and it stained the sky above the hollow where our town ought to be.

I thought perhaps our soldiers were burning musty forage and old straw pallets and such camp luggage as had become useless.

But when suddenly I came upon a street which entered the town, I saw a strange church tower in the swimming smoke, and knew that I was not in our village.

No; here was a larger town which had no wall, no bell-tower for our carrillon so justly famous, no low hills set with vineyards; and our pretty château, which should have dominated the valley, was not there. "Mary Mother," thought I, "into what strange country am I arrived then?"

And now I saw soldiers in the street ahead—many of them, some mounted, some afoot—all in scarlet uniforms, jack-boots and bandoliers.

Also I heard a tumult within the town which reeked of smoke; and came presently among the soldiers who were driving men, women and little children out of houses.

I saw a group of officers sitting their horses in the square and looking on while their Red Dragoons and

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Gendarmes of France dragged women and children into a long double line, and drove the men, young and old, into another rank where Red Dragoons with naked sabres guarded the straggling formation.

Through the smoke which steamed up from a heap of burning débris in the middle of the square near the fountain I could see gendarmes running and dumping arm-fulls of bound books into the fire.

There was much noise—much shouting and fierce laughter from the soldiery; lamenting and frightened cries of women and children, and some dreadful screaming from houses where Red Dragoons swarmed about doorways.

What all this cruel disorder was about I could no longer doubt. Never before had I witnessed a dragonnade. But this was the kind of scene which I had heard described more than once in whispers by the young subalterns of our Régiment d'Aulone. We were forbidden ever to discuss these tragedies which lately, and particularly since the revocation of the famous Edict of Nantes, were becoming more and more common in our unhappy land of France, but not even kings nor their mistresses can utter silence thought and render the tongue forever dumb.

I had drawn bridle at the entrance to the square of this wretched little town which now I knew to be Ombre-la-Vallée. My two leashed hound-pups squatted on their haunches beside my horse gazing excitedly upon all this tumult.

I saw two dead peasants lying on the paved way near the fountain, and a dead child tumbled down at the foot of the Shrine.

A dreadful racket arose from a distant row of houses where Red Dragoons were throwing furniture out of the

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windows to the pavement below—chairs, chests, earthen vessels and pewters; and I saw a child's cradle come crashing down and fly into oaken splinters, and a mattress, on fire, pushed through a window and fall in flames.

The spectacle sickened me; I had enough of it; and was already turning my horse, when four Red Dragoons with their musket-butts resting on their thighs, put their horses into sudden motion to intercept me.

"Wait a moment, young man!" they cried out to me through the tumult; and I saw a heavy, red-faced officer ride out from among a group of horsemen and spur toward me at a canter.

The four Dragoons already had surrounded me when he arrived. He seemed astonished to perceive that I was a girl in my hunting dress of a youth.

"Well," said he, "who the devil are you and what are you doing in Ombre-la-Vallée, upon this day of justice?"

"Monsieur," said I, "an Aulone is not to be questioned in such a fashion."

"What's that!" he exclaimed, turning redder.

"I am Mademoiselle de Maniscamp," said I very quietly. "Be pleased to remove your hat, Monsieur, and address me properly."

The rebuke left him with mouth open, and when he recovered he seemed to be of two minds as to his behaviour toward me.

"Come, Sir," said I curtly, "make your manners and say what you have to say, for this brutal spectacle neither entertains nor pleases me."

He took off his plumed hat but gave me an ugly look. He bowed and said very distinctly:

"Do I understand, Mademoiselle de Maniscamp, that the Aulones regard the justice of His Majesty our King as a brutal spectacle?"

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Startled, I made no reply for a moment; then with cold politeness I made him cover himself, and he pulled on his hat and stared at me with all the insolence he dared.

"Monsieur Captain of Dragoons," said I, "His Majesty's justice, like the justice of the Most High, is too awful and too wonderful for a young girl to comprehend. . . . But the spectacle of that little dead child lying yonder at the feet of our Mother of Sorrows, pierces my heart—as the spear thrust pierced our Lord on Calvary."

"Mademoiselle," said he, "you answer like a Huguenot!"

"Monsieur, I am not *answering* you! I am *instructing* you! And now I am giving you a command; open your ranks!"

"Mademoiselle—"

"Clear away your Red horsemen who bar my road! Do you hear, Sir?"

"If it be the lords of Aulone who speak through your lips," he retorted, "let the Count d'Aulone beware of such heresies!"

"*Sang dieu!*" I cried in a passion, "will you affront an Aulone with your Red baby butchers?"

I took my short boar-spear in both hands, turned in my saddle and struck a dragoon's horse over the buttock with the flat of the blade. The poor beast reared and nearly knocked over the rider next to him.

At the same instant I swung my horse and spurred past the other two horsemen. One tried to seize my bridle; the insult enraged me, and I fetched his wrist such a crack with the spear-haft that he yelled his pain and vexation.

Clear of them I turned and called back to the officer: "If you wish a further lesson my father will bring you

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our Regiment of Aulone to teach you and your Red Dragoons good manners!"

That was a foolish threat. I knew it while I uttered it. I knew I had been indiscreet; that the slowly increasing terror of the dragonnades was paralyzing all the land; and that those in whose hearts a single spark of freedom of thought still lodged, should conduct with discretion lest they arouse in our King and his ministers any slightest doubt concerning their loyalty and faith.

As I galloped away toward our domain, which now I knew I could discover by skirting the Forest of Maniscamp to the westward, I felt very sorry and very weary concerning what I had said and done.

Because, although my father and I professed the true faith, and had always lived within its every observance, yet, since the repeal of the edict, we still treasured secretly my mother's Huguenot prayer-book and her hymnal. God only knew, now, whither our hearts were inclining us, or where our intelligence and honesty might lead us ere God summoned us to hear from his own lips the eternal truths concerning which men again were disputing and oppressing and slaying one another throughout a lovely world made for charity, kindness and gentleness alone.

It was twilight when I, my weary horse and my two limping dogs rode into the stable-court of the château of Maniscamp-sur-Ombre.

Hastur came to dismount me, tall, grave, bowing at my stirrups with bared head.

"You killed?" I asked in a mortified voice.

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

"A good head, Hastur?"

"A silver, Mademoiselle; the tusks crossed over a snout with three bends."

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I said: "Lionne's pups drove a six year to bay in the junipers. . . . We could not kill."

"No, Mademoiselle," said he gravely, "*but the boar could have.*"

"I am ashamed of my disobedience," said I in a low voice.

Passing the mews in the dusk I saw the Sieur Piriou Louis near the blocs with my pet falcon on his wrist but did not look at him, pretending not to see him though I heard the bird flapping at sight of me.

Very slowly I entered the house, tired and contrite, hatless, wet with sweat and lather; and seeing my father seated by the blazing fire in the great hall, went to him and dropped on both knees and laid my tangled head against his breast.

"Just a little fool," I whispered, "—I beg forgiveness, Monsieur."

"Darling," he laughed, "what are we all but fools? In all the world I never knew but one who was not."

"My mother."

"Only she, Roussette."

That night, when I was in bed, my father came, as usual, for the last kiss.

"We must be cautious," he said, "and very careful that nobody ever shall learn that we treasure your mother's Huguenot prayer-book to read in it and study so that we some day may judge for ourselves which, after all, might be the nearest path to God."

I put both arms around his neck in silence.

And now, by your leave, I shall recover my equanimity and my breath, and permit myself leisure to tell you who and what we are—my father and I—and describe to you

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where we lived and something concerning my childhood and our circumstances.

For, although today I am only twenty-two years old, I have seemed to live and see and be a part of events which might well have filled as many centuries.

CHAPTER IV

NOT because it has become fashionable for women of wit and fashion to write their memoirs, am I persuaded to imitate them.

I was born French, became English, yet today am neither.

I belong to a country which has no king of its own, no flag—a land which has not yet conceived of Liberty and borne a nation.

We know not when that birth shall be; we know not how to provide for our unborn; we know only that we shall welcome it, love it, and gaily defend it.

If I have children to live after me, I wish them to know something of the history of these times and of their mother. And of this young and timid star which hath not yet arisen where, in the west, the Sun-King still glows refulgent.

Therefore I write my memoirs. And gaily, too. For I do all things with a light heart—but with *all* my heart. I have lived gaily. And I assure you—but with perfect respect to God—that when I die I shall render up my soul to Him with all the gaiety in the world.

Yet I have seen enough to sour me had I been made of almond paste.

I have seen blood flow, but it has not quenched my spirit; I have seen fire pass, and it has not turned my heart to cinders. Famine I have seen, and rapine and lust; and have lost faith neither in God nor man.

Only in kings. Yet only two have I ever beheld, so should not fairly condemn all kings.

Maybe, unknowing, I have beheld more than these two

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kings. Some wit has said that our Sun-King, Louis, hath in him sufficient substance to make three kings and an honest man. Shaming the Trinity.

Well, there is much pen-scratching in the world today. I know not if old Maintenon writes her thoughts. I know only that she turns them into dreadful deeds.

Many women of my times are writing memoirs—women of quality, of heart, of imagination, such as Madame de Montespan and Madame de Montpensier, and Madame de Sévigné.

Others, better worth listening to, remain mute—like Mesdames de Frontenac and de la Vallière.

As for me, you shall have the politeness to judge whether truly it be vanity or something worthier that urges my inky quill, for I shall conceal no secrets from you, nor paint myself and others better than we are, nor tell you fashionable lies. Indeed, I could not if I would, having had little commerce with courts and great folk; and that for but a brief period.

No; I knew village life, and camp life, and soldiers, and long marches amid clouds of dust that never settled, and through rains that rained all day, day after day.

Not the dreamy ballet music of Versailles, but the roll of drums was the music I knew as a child, save for my *clavecin*, or some Breton bag-pipe, or the throstle-notes of a lonely shepherd's reed.

Not mine familiarity with sun-masks, ribbons, silks, silver slippers; nor with jewels and laces; nor with gilded coaches with eight horses. I knew only the white uniforms of our regiment; blue, red, gray uniforms of other regulars; steel cavalry corselets and spurred jack-boots; heavy military wagons rolling slowly behind artillery through dust or depthless mud; and the rambling column of an infantry battalion on the march with its endless train

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of mules, led-horses, *charettes*, cannons, sick folk, soldiers, wives and children, *vivandières*, trulls, drabs, prostitutes. . . .

But Louvois altered all that.

My father's regiment was the Régiment d'Aulone, none could boast better discipline and health.

Doubtless you know that, excepting the gorgeous companies, battalions, and regiments of the King's household troops—which included the interior and exterior bodyguards at Versailles—all regular regiments were named after towns and districts of France, or took the names of their colonels who maintained them.

The King's regiments wore blue, turned up with various colours; the Princes' battalions, dragoons and gendarmerie of France were in red. Only three regiments, I believe, wore white uniforms in my youth.

One of the three, when I was a child, was our Régiment d'Aulone; and it was clothed in white uniforms; lined and faced with violet.

Well, now that you know our regiment, I shall have the honour to present to you my father, its *maître des champs* or colonel, Ferral de Maniscamp, Count d'Aulone.

His hair was as red and abundant as the King's, but his eyes were sea-blue where the King's were brown. Dignity, gravity, perfect grace and a perfect person were the Sun-King's. My father was tall, lean, and as supple and sound as his own sword. The King wore majesty like a flaming robe. God knows who truly begot him. My father was frank, animated, and bore him with a gay and careless confidence in his race and quality which needed no mask of awe-inspiring gravity to impose it. Herein differing from the King whom, otherwise, he somewhat resembled.

My father used to say that between the King and him-

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self there was only this slight difference: the King was the richest man on earth; and my father was ruined. When he said this, he would laugh and laugh and clap his thighs and laugh.

Yet it was quite true. My father was a ruined man; and always had been as long as I could remember. His ancestors seemed to have been but a parcel of roving scamps who, from generation to generation, inherited and transmitted nothing except debts.

The château, farm, forests, villages, and broad meadows of Maniscamp were loaded with debt. So was Aulone.

To this day I do not know how my father kept up his regiment and maintained his properties and me. Yet we seemed to lack nothing. But I sometimes wonder what old Maintenon found to pick over after we were gone from France.

Well, now that you have met my father's laughing eyes of clear sea-blue, and now that he has saluted you with every compliment due your character and quality, I venture to take myself by one finger and make you a low, respectful reverence.

*C'est moi, s'il vous plaît, Messieurs et Mesdames—*Michelle de Maniscamp, who has the privilege of making to you my most polite manners.

And, because I have promised to tell you only the truth about everything and everybody, I shall keep my word at once.

As a child I was considered pretty; and today, at twenty-two, I am agreeable to look upon.

My hair is red; my skin very white; my eyes a kind of violet gray with black lashes. I am of middle height, somewhat slim; a body well turned and smooth and straight, with limber limbs nicely coupled to it.

I have been assured by courteous old ladies and flatter-

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ing gentlemen that my complexion resembles Ninon's, and my hands and feet Gabrielle's. I think they are right. All these mercies are to thank God for. And yet, had I been fashioned like the late Queen—poor soul!—or like the jolly old Palatine; or had I teeth like hers, which were all black from chocolate, I do not believe I should have been less gay in my mind and heart or any the less happy to be alive.

Mine is a gay character. Unlike many well-born demoiselles I never entertained any desire to take the veil, although ladies of our family had the right of asylum and of sanctuary in any convent of the Recollette Nuns, because of the benefices which the Aulones for many, many years had conferred upon that holy order.

And now that you have been so gracious as to have made my acquaintance, let us begin—I, to write this history as truthfully as I know how; you to have the complaisance and patience to peruse it as I offer to you the inky sheets fresh sanded, one after another.

And so, God willing, part friends. Although all around us the world is aflame, and rising in arms; and thrones are shaking and crowns falling, and the Sun of France is slowly sinking toward the west—where lies the grave of all suns and of all kings—even of the *Roi Soleil*.

CHAPTER V

ONE of my early memories is of drums. Our drums were painted white with three gold *fleurs-de-lis* on one side and the d'Aulone coat of arms upon the other. We did not then have clarions or other regimental music. Also the drummers beat at random and as they chose, and not then with the rhythm and cadence that times the tread of troops today. But Louvois soon changed all that.

As for fifes, I never heard any in France, nor anywhere else, until I heard that warning outburst of British fifes and drums aboard the flagship of Sir William Phips. . . . But, of those matters, later.

As a child I loved the drums of Aulone. I adored to see the drummers in their fantasie, marching ahead, rat-a-plan! rat-a-plan!—the lines of swaying muskets balancing behind; heavy bandoulières shining; mounted officers in half-armour, their corselets all aglitter and their plumed hats blowing.

Ah, yes. But Louvois changed all that, too; for very soon he gave our soldiers guns with wheel-locks and bayonets, instead of muskets; he drilled our drummers and taught them to beat a march; he took the last scrap of armour from the infantry; the corselet no longer remained the badge of rank for general officers; and only the cavalry now wears it. . . .

Well, I will not weary you with details; and, being a soldier's daughter, and accustomed more to camps than to salons, I should strive to remember that such matters may become tiresome to the most amiable of readers.

When we lived at Château d'Aulone I used to climb the

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great gates and, hanging to the armorial sea-hawks of gilded lead, watch for our regiment to pass.

And while I waited for the drums I used to sing in a lusty voice:

Joli tambour revenant de la guerre,

A sa ceinture avait rose jolie.

La fille du Roi était à sa fenêtre,

“—Joli tambour veux-tu m’donner ta rose?”

“—Sire, le Roi, veux-tu m’donner ta fille?”

“—Joli tambour, dis-moi quel est ton père?”

“—Sire, le Roi, c’est le Roi d’Angleterre.”

“—Joli tambour, je te donne ma fille!”

Which is the manner in which I chose to sing that ancient song—to suit myself—for it did not please me to sing it as saucily as it had been written. How ridiculous, indeed, that any English drummer-lad had ever dared be impudent to a demoiselle of France!

Ah, well, I have learned something about impudence since then.

I was brought up with wider freedom than most children. Necessarily, in a measure: as, for example, when our Régiment d’Aulone took the field I travelled with it in our carrosse with governess and maids, or rode with my father at the head of the long column, day after day.

Many a march, many a camp, and more than one campaign have I made as a young girl. However, it was no more than the soldiers’ wives accomplished.

My father loved me and desired my company. Besides, he wished me to grow up hardy and fearless. And so, at twelve, dressed like any lad of quality in hunting doublet and soft thigh boots, I rode beside my father when the

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regiment was en route, or sat in the carrosse with my governess and continued my education in Latin and English and such polite arts as the shaking of the carriage permitted.

When we were at home—at Maniscamp-sur-Ombre or at Aulone—it was the same. I submitted without pouting to education, and I enjoyed much liberty in consequence.

At that time, except near such palaces as Versailles, and in Paris, there were few barracks for troops in France; and, at Maniscamp and Aulone, our soldiers were in cantonments. Which was always hard on the people; but Louvois changed all that . . . he whom a brutal epitaph commemorated: "Here lies Louvois whom nobody loved but whom everybody regretted."

I liked Aulone the better of our two homes, though I loved to fish for graylings in the river Ombre at Maniscamp. But there were carp-ponds at Aulone which did well enough for a child. And there it was I learned to swim, naked as a new-hatched bird; and my maid screaming at me from the shore because always I stripped off my chemise when beyond her reach.

I love water. So did my father. Bathing for the sake of cleanliness was not, and is not, popular among our people—neither at Versailles nor in chaume nor faubourg. And it may have been true, what Madame de Montespan said to the King—a filthy *mot*.

But my father's chiefest passion was to read the classics; and he loved to model his manner of living upon the healthy customs of the heroes of antiquity.

Therefore, he bathed frequently, and exercised; and when he ate and drank he did both thoroughly, I warrant you, and *de bon cœur*.

So I; and adored water—not so much in my Burgundy,

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though that was the law laid down for me—but rills and cascades and rivers and even carp-ponds I loved to haunt. There was something about water, as an element, that most powerfully attracted me. They say our ancestors d'Aulone roved the seas. Well, I meant to sail upon those seven seas myself, some day. Meanwhile, I haunted water at every opportunity and kept my body clean, although learned men and pious often warned my father that we were like to slay ourselves with so much bathing.

My father, as I said, was a ruined man. Nevertheless, he was always planning to embellish Aulone. He built a bath of marble for his apartments and another for mine.

He built out of pink marble a bathing pool among the beech trees in Aulone Woods. God only knows who paid for these extravagances. At all events, now they belong to old Maintenon. The King has none finer at Versailles. I wonder whether there is a bath at St. Cyr. No doubt; for old Maintenon listened to Ninon; and *she* bathed.

My father would never wear a peruke. He had plenty of reddish bronze hair far prettier, and he carried his barber everywhere with him to keep his hair clean and curled to his shoulders like the fastidious cavalier he was.

That barber, whose name was Tonnay, also kept my hair trimmed and in curl; and I wore it—as we wear it still—in a thick fringe across the forehead and a curly cloud over the ears. In length it should be no longer than the nape of the neck—not a becoming fashion to heavy features, seeming to vulgarize them—but to a delicate face it lends much charm; and is, I suppose, a godsend to women with large ears.

Now, when not en route with the regiment, the order of my life at Maniscamp or Aulone was regular and simple. Morning prayers—and I must tell you, later,

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concerning our religious life—morning chocolate, toilette with two maids, and then the ceremony of waiting upon my father to make inquiry concerning his health and to await his commands. Not that he ever gave me any. Followed a tour in the gardens; breakfast, and then to my education—with my corps of instructors—arts, sciences, and accomplishments, Madame de Lambeaux, my governess and lady companion; Monsieur Portmenus for singing, dancing, and the *clavecin*; Bouffon, an old sergeant of the regiment for fencing, riding, and tilting at the ring; and my father to criticise and polish me in general.

Well, then, there was dinner, and the remainder of the day for me, and my own occupations to choose. And supper at nine.

In springtime I adored the farm with its newborn lambs and tiny chicks, and the sweet odour of freshly plowed land. All the world was a-thrill, then, and so was I—and it seemed like heaven to see primroses and black-thorn in bloom, and hear the cuckoo loud amid budding woodlands, and larks in the azure singing like cherubim. Or, in summer, waist-deep in meadows, or swimming in the *étang*, or, from a painted shallop, fishing with scarlet quill afloat; or, through the drowsy afternoons, reading or embroidering *en petit point* and *gros* while my cats and spaniels dozed near upon cushions.

Or, in autumn, walking ankle deep among fallen leaves in chestnut woods; or, a-horse, galloping behind our hounds beside my father with our huntsmen in white and violet, and stag or boar or wolf afoot; and the horns all sounding amid the music of the hounds.

And the rare snows in winter—lovely beyond words, but lasting only a day or two—sheets of molten silver over field and stubble where pheasants picked their way

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with dignity and rabbits frisked like crazy things among the withered ferns.

In the village the chimney smoke smelled aromatic; our soldiers promenaded arm in arm, smoking their long, straight pipes, their white watch-coats turned up about their reddened ears. Women broke ice in the fountain to draw water; the laundry froze on naked bushes; a pleasant smell of cooking and of mulled wine exhaled from cottage doors, and most heavenly warm gusts from pastry shops.

Ah, me! France is a pleasant land resembling paradise, I think—save for a surplus of saints and devils, and too many corpses after a dragonnade. . . . Poor King. Poor saints. Poor devils. Poor, poor dead. . . . And old Maintenon at prayer. And England's King a wandering refugee. . . .

CHAPTER VI

NOW, with all the freedom I enjoyed, I had few friends of my own age. Because there were few suitable either at Maniscamp or Aulone.

I made friends frankly and was sociably inclined; but however friendly one's heart, one's intelligence demurs when minds are as inferior as social rank.

In the villages there were no girls or lads suitable as playmates. A peasant is a peasant in mind as well as body. My heart is kind, and, in it, our people had their place. But there could be no place for them in my mind.

One of my maids, Nicole Lannion, however, was different. She was my foster-sister; her father was a magistrate in Maniscamp-sur-Ombre. I loved her with heart and mind. We romped together as children.

Another maid, Nanon Dubois, was daughter to an apothecary. She was an amiable girl. It was she who screamed when I swam naked in the *étang*.

There was a drummer-boy in our regiment, a foundling, named Colin, who had a cherub face and gentle manners; and I think he had in him gentle blood, too.

With him, also, I played as a child; and, as I grew up, there remained a real friendship between us as much as respect permitted.

So you see that, as a child, I had no companions of my own age and station to gallop about with—nobody to contend with me roughly, or snatch from me the ripest peach, or push me into the brook, or pull me about without ceremony. Which is true comradeship.

However, I was never lonely. Always my father was

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my comrade; always the officers of our regiment were ready to play with me and jest with me, and make parties anywhere I desired to go.

I grew very fast. At twelve I appeared to be sixteen. At sixteen I was mature though very slender and boyish of face and figure.

Then it was that I enjoyed more companionship with the younger officers of our regiment—and, for the first time, knew restrictions—Madame de Lambeaux being always in attendance as well as Nicole.

Good-bye to Colin, my little drummer-lad. Only chance meetings, frankly friendly on my part—and a little mischievous, too, because I suspected he was lingering to make cherub eyes at Nicole who turned up at him her nose which God already had turned up enough.

Among these younger officers in the Régiment d'Aulone there were three to whom I accorded a frank friendship, and with whom I was on those delightful terms which so thrill a young girl who, for the first time, becomes conscious of her own advantages and of the effect of them upon young men.

They were poor young men—as we all were poor in the Régiment d'Aulone. One was Captain the Vicomte de Bevis. Another, Captain the Chevallier d'Auroc. Another, Captain Restif de Moidrey, Sieur de Longuevieu. He was older than Philippe de Bevis and Georges d'Auroc.

These gentlemen became intimates of our house at Aulone; and one or all of them were always there when not on duty.

Now, as I am telling only truths, I admit that I fell violently in love with them all, one after another—and even, at intervals, seemed to be in love with all of them at the same time.

It was as desperate as it always is with the very young.

Bevis
d'Auroc
Moidrey

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I thought I should die unless I had my way with them, and they with me.

Each one, in turn, betrayed all the customary symptoms. I witnessed them. I saw each one, in turn, become pale with suppressed passion; each one lose appetite, although our table and cellar were of the best. I beheld each one, in turn, glare jealously upon the others. My small head went 'round until I was so dizzy that I did not know which one I loved.

I loved somebody; that seemed certain. I was very likely to blush; subject to odd palpitations; inclined to extravagant vivacity or to breathless silences or to a new, dreamy lassitude of mind and body.

One symptom, however, I did not notice until long afterward; I never lost my appetite.

Not even when I knew that Philippe's father had written to mine; or when relatives of Georges and, later, of Restif de Moidrey, addressed my father in their kinsmen's behalf.

I did not lose my appetite or colour; but, on each occasion, I shed a few tears, I believe. And, I think, to each in turn my eyes spoke a tender language of hope mingled with resignation.

But it all was as obvious as the nose on the King's face; I had no money; they had no money. One may love on nothing a year, but one does not marry on it.

Yet the situation was subtly agreeable to me. What girl does not welcome devotion? In the very perplexity of my own heart there was pleasurable excitement, a sort of happy anguish; and always the breathless sense of suspense—of something surprising impending. Which never arrived. Yet a perpetual curiosity possessed me concerning young men, and there was much charm in it, and very little pain. For the emotions of a novice in love with

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Love leave no deeper traces than do April zephyrs ruffling woodland pools; or a virgin's breath upon her mirror.

Besides, thanks to my hardy education, I was more like a stripling lad in whom emotions are superficial, and amount to no more than romantic sentiments natural to adolescence. I was totally ignorant of passion.

That continual exercise and development of mind and body from earliest childhood was making of me a creature as tough and sound and springy as a long-bow in its sheath of silk. Nobody had yet bent me or made the bow-string vibrate.

I had marched, eaten, slept with our regiment. At the age of thirteen I had watched the siege of Strasbourg; I was fifteen when our regiment lay in camp before Courtrai; I heard the terrible cannonade of Luxembourg. All the vast pageant of that war passed before my youthful eyes like tongues of flame flashing through smoke against which phantom armies moved. And after Ratisbonne our regiment marched once more for Aulone.

Now there is one matter which I have not mentioned. My mother, whom death gave to God while she was giving me to the world, was Huguenot.

In our hearts my father and I were somewhat inclined that way. We regarded all Huguenots with kindness, and their constant persecution made us uneasy and sad.

When fear of hell and hope of salvation amount to spiritual cowardice, intolerance and tyranny go mad through fright. The Sun-King was—and is—a moral coward. Old Maintenon has made him one. It was she whose pious gesture signalled the Red Dragoons to mount their saddles. It was she who ordered them to make converts at the point of their sabres. And the dragonnades began.

Deep in our souls my father and I resented the insult

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to my mother's sainted memory. Our hearts beat in sympathy for the unhappy folk of Béarn.

What further violence old Maintenon meditated none could guess, or what new Scarronade was hatching in her secret mind.

But these infamies had not come nigh us at Aulone. None questioned us. It would have been a bold man who dared meddle with my father's conscience.

But a man *did*.

However, concerning these matters I shall tell you in proper sequence. The shadows that sometimes passed over us in those earlier days darkened the sun only for brief moments. We continued to worship God as our consciences dictated, but with unorthodox sympathy and tenderness for those who worshipped Him in their own fashion. And never at table, or in salon, or on the terrace, or at the chase, or in the regiment would my father tolerate religious discussions or any gossip or disputes, maintaining that such matters concerned only one's private conscience, and the confessional for those who desired it.

As for me, while, at times, religious and moral problems invaded my mind to perplex it, they left no deep impressions at that age.

Concerning the world, I was both ignorant and sophisticated at the same time. I was aware, perforce, of certain facts which I had been educated to consider immoral. To me, these facts remained cold and concrete, and were instinctively accepted, and I seldom thought about them.

Yet, sometimes I wondered why our great folk should have so many mistresses and lovers if God forbids adultery; and why our King had so many children by great ladies to whom he was not married.

But such innocent speculations perplexed my mind but

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little; with proud indifference I turned my head from the grosser spectacles which human degradation presented in village life and in camps. They meant to me no more than the morals of the farmyard.

And, as for the piquancy and sauciness in epigram and verse and song, and in the romances I perused, why, I laughed when I understood the wit concealed under some gay vulgarity; but more often I understood nothing at all, and laughed only to see others laugh. I tell you sincerely—but make no merit of it because it is natural to me—there was, and is, no inclination to ignoble curiosity in my mind which always has been too happily pre-occupied with other matters.

CHAPTER VII

AFTER I was sixteen, about once or twice a year my father would become uneasy concerning my future.

I began to recognize the symptoms when such doubts suddenly assailed him, for, all the morning, he would frown and shake his head and glance at me askance out of troubled eyes. And always, after dinner, he would propose a tour of the gardens with me. Then, at the sun-dial where Venus and Cupid are joyously dancing with joined hands, he would say to me abruptly:

"I neglect you, Roussette! I am a bad father."

"Why, Father?"

"Because I should occupy my mind with your future. Do you not wish to be married some day?"

I could not help it; I always laughed like the gay empty-head that I was. I would not listen; I would not discuss such things; I would seize his hands and make him dance with me around the sun-dial where the marble Madam Venus and her scamp of a son were dancing so lightly around an altar where lay a marble human heart in flames.

No; I had no mind to marry anybody, now that my triple romance with my three young captains was ending in the gayest of friendships without a single heart-burn or regret.

I mean on my part. Because I really don't know how sincere were these three young men who vowed that love and passion still consumed them, and that despair was like to do their business for them within the year.

I think, now, they really were in love with me. Also, I now am quite aware that young men are very easily inflamed, and that it is perfectly possible for them to fall

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in love several times in as many years. Nor do I mean lightly, in the fashion of Versailles; but deeply and genuinely. Because the capacity for love in a man seems infinite to such a girl as I. But God seems to have made them so; and the difference between our sexes is the eternal difference between the King and the gentle, lame girl who loved but once, and to her soul's undoing, God pardon her.

Well, so much for love! I knew nothing about it and required less either for my health or peace of mind.

My father sometimes muttered of a suitable marriage and murmured hints of this young man or that—vicomtes I never heard of—heirs to baronies I didn't know, and I paid little attention.

And so childhood and girlhood, and earliest maturity passed joyously for me at home or abroad—it made no difference to me where I was in those days of glowing youth and health. . . . Thank God they have now returned to me at twenty-two, who have lived through scenes which might have blasted both and charred to cinders the very soul within me. . . .

Well, I had been educated to ignore evil, and to make only a gay jest of Monsieur Death who pulls such extraordinary faces to frighten us. Had I been born in the gutter probably I would have placed my thumb against the tip of my nose and spread my fingers at Monsieur Death.

Pray do not be shocked; I never have been guilty of so indecent a gesture.

One day in June I was seated on the grass under a very old apple tree. My lute lay across my knees; my three cavaliers were in attendance; the Vicomte de Bevis was weaving a daisy-wreath for my hair—it being the Trianon

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fashion to pretend to innocent diversions. D'Auroc held my fan which was round, and made of feathers, with a long amber handle. I saw him rest it against his lips more than once and make martyred eyes at me.

Restif de Moidrey lay upon his stomach and moodily regarded the misty, golden valley which spread away below us beyond our gates.

On that day I had become exactly twenty years of age. Never had I enjoyed such glowing health; never had I been gayer, happier, or so ardently in love with life.

The conversation, however, had been sombre, and concerned Huguenots and dragonnades and the terrible Edict—another Scarronade—and the wickedest deed ever done by woman upon this earth.

However, I took no part in the conversation which drifted between Moidrey and Bevis, mostly, and seemed to bore d'Auroc.

He said: "With due respect to God, we are driving out of France a million Frenchmen who may be needed when all Europe marches to give us battle."

Moidrey, glum, his dark face framed by his hands, answered that he was aware of no such league to destroy France.

"You are wrong," remarked Bevis; "there exists a secret league against us since the King signed the Edict."

"Who meditates attacking us?" demanded Moidrey.

"The King of Spain, the King of Sweden, the Emperor, the German princes—and, probably, England," replied Bevis.

"England?" Moidrey laughed.

"Laugh on," said Bevis, "but if the Prince of Orange attacks King James and drives him out of England, the next act in the drama will be war on France. And then we shall have the world in arms against us."

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"Does it worry you?" inquired Moidrey.

Both d'Auroc and Bevis smiled at the enormity. But the former said: "Nevertheless, this is no time to drive a million sturdy Frenchmen into exile."

"As for that," growled Moidrey, "let us leave it on the highway."

"Somewhere," added Bevis, "between Versailles and St. Cyr."

"My cousin d'Estremont," said d'Auroc thoughtfully, "is Huguenot; and I love him very dearly."

Moidrey sneered: "Everybody has a pet Huguenot," he remarked. "Who is yours, Philippe?"

But I had been listening, and I had had enough. So, when my little, blond Bevis opened his cupid mouth to reply, I swept the lute strings loudly with my fingers—a signal these young gentlemen could not politely ignore.

D'Auroc laughed; Bevis gave me a languishing look: "To soften your reproof, Mademoiselle," said he sentimentally, "will you condescend to mitigate it with a love-song?"

"Chanson d'amour? Certainly," said I sweetly.

Doubtless they expected some new and fashionable song of passion—the sort Versailles adores and Molière used to mock at.

"Nicole!" I cried gaily, "my plectron, if you please!" choosing to so use my lute because of my tender fingertips.

So I took from Nicole the ivory plectron set with tiny jewels, and I sang to these hot-hearted young men an ancient, lisping *chansonnette* which made a jest of love:

Trois belles princesses
(Vole, vole, mon cœur, vole!)
Trois belles princesses

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*Sont couchés dessous
Un pommier doux,
Tout doux, et iou,
Tout doux, et iou.*

*Cà, dit la première
Je crois qu'il fait jou'!
Cà, dit la seconde,
J'entends le tambou'!
Cà, dit la troisième,
C'est mon ami doux!
Il va-t-à la guerre
Combattre pour nous.
S'il gagne bataille
Aura mes amou's;
Qu'il perde bataille
Les aura toujou's!
(Vole, vole, mon cœur, vole!)
Les aura toujou's.*

My young gallants all were laughing before I finished the *chansonette*. They demanded I repeat it; I made Nicole sing with me; and presently they all joined in with such good will that my father, who had ridden up across the lawn behind us, laughed outright from his saddle.

We all rose instantly in respect, but he took off his plumed hat and begged us to resume our seats.

"Roussette," said he, "I know a young baroness who speaks naturally with the baby lisp which seems to afflict the three princesses in your little love song."

"She must be something of a doll," said I with a shrug of disgust.

"She resembles a pretty doll, and she lisps," said my father, "but she is no fool. And of that you may judge

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this very afternoon, Roussette, because she is on her way to Aulone, and her courier has just arrived to announce her."

"Is she coming to pay us a visit?" I asked, delighted.

"So I have the honour to be informed." He cast a sardonic eye upon his young captains. "A widow, gentlemen, and extremely wealthy."

My gallants bowed respectfully, but were far too polite to seem interested. All the same I thought it very funny to see them all bowing in a row and pretending lack of interest in an heiress because I chanced to be present.

"And who," I inquired, "is this pretty, lisping doll, and for what reason does she do us the honour of visiting us?"

It appeared that she was a cousin on my mother's side—several times removed—but a cousin is always a cousin with us.

She was Athalie d'Auris, Baroness d'Elven—a Swedish title. I did not recollect ever having heard of her title or of her. But de Moidrey knew of her, and remarked that her late husband had been attached to the King of Sweden's Embassy, and that she was agreeably placed at Versailles. He added that she was so celebrated for moral behaviour that she enjoyed the reputation of being stuffed with sawdust.

At which my father laughed and laughed, and seemed to consider such a reputation for chastity extremely funny.

"It's no credit with God," said I, "to keep out of mischief when one is stuffed only with sawdust."

I was quite serious; but everybody gave way to uncontrolled mirth, and, in my confusion, I saw even Nicole laughing. Well, what I maintained is true. And one day I was destined to prove it to myself. . . . Be patient; you shall know everything in the end.

CHAPTER VIII

OUR kinswoman, Athalie d'Auris, Baroness of Elven, arrived at Aulone very late that afternoon. She came in an enormous carrosse plastered with armorial bearings, and enamelled all over in carmine and silver. She looked precisely like a Cinderella-doll of porcelain sitting inside the transmogrified pumpkin.

Six gray horses drew her; two piqueurs in carmine and silver livery galloped ahead; two more capered behind. Her luggage followed in a canvas-covered van; a very large cloud of golden dust accompanied the pageant.

My father, freshly curled and shaven, wearing his best uniform, with court sword, and carrying his best hat in his hand, descended all the way to the foot of the terrace steps to welcome her.

He handed her from her coach with every circumstance and ceremony; he bowed and bowed and she curtsied and curtsied as great folk only know how to accomplish such ceremonies.

Being our cousin she offered both cheeks; and I do not criticise my father for saluting them with all the warmth in the world.

Then she looked at me out of china-blue eyes under slender and symmetrically pencilled eyebrows. I curtsied. So did she.

"Emb'ace moi ma cousine," she said in her lisping voice.

I did so, and with hearty good will; and her flower-like mouth touched both my cheeks in turn.

Now my father gave her his hand, and she laid two slim, pointed fingers lightly upon it. Thus, gracefully, leisurely, they mounted the marble steps. Ushering her

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into the great hall, my father's violet-plumed hat swept the parquet:

"Aulone is yours, cousin, without a parley or a summons," he said gaily.

Up went her delicately arched eyebrows in a placid baby stare:

"Gwacious," she lisped, "you ove'whelm me, my cousin, *with such a multitude of debts!*"

It was a most deliciously impudent reply, but her porcelain features remained expressionless.

In my amazement I reddened, but my father threw back his handsome head and laughed till the gilded rafters rang above us.

As for the Baroness Elven, her mouth formed a scarlet letter O, and her silky eyelids flickered rapidly at him. It was her manner of laughing. Rare was her smile; and when it came it was merely a faint sweetening of her lips.

She seemed like a fairy doll, exquisite, perfect, mute, and mindless; but she had a mind and a tongue, and both were exceedingly alert though the lisp and stare denied them.

For refreshment she tasted a glass of wine, a strawberry, and a cream-puff, gazing about her the while without the slightest trace of expression.

Presently, however, she requested that I conduct her over the château and gave me her lovely hand. Her sole comment upon the pictures, the tapestries, the curio cabinets, was a polite, "Gwacious!"—but the marble baths seemed to surprise and enchant her. Afloat in one of them, I imagined she would resemble a pink water-lily, and I told her so; and up went her brows and her lids fluttered at me like white moths edged with jet. I also laughed in my own fashion, which is full throated; and she told me I was "ado'ble."

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When we arrived at the apartments reserved for her, she took my hands between hers and looked intently into my eyes without any expression at all. After a moment she kissed me. Her maids came in with fresh linen; I took my leave and ran down the great staircase to the hall where my father was standing and examining a letter.

He gave me an odd, sombre look; thrust the letter into his pocket; but his face cleared immediately, and we walked out to the terrace where sunset was turning the world to ruddy gold.

Down the great avenue I saw a dusty courier galloping. He wore the red uniform of the Gendarmerie of France.

"What troubles you?" I asked, laying my hand on my father's sleeve.

He smiled and denied any trouble. Later, however, he remarked carelessly that the Régiment d'Aulone had just received marching orders.

"Is it war?" I asked quickly.

"I know of none."

"Where do we march, Father?"

"Toward Versailles, I believe."

This excited me, for I could not remember when our regiment had ever gone into cantonments near that garrison.

But he said that we were ordered to the barracks of a Royal Regiment which had been sent elsewhere. That excited me still more. Never within my memory had the Régiment d'Aulone formed any portion of the garrison of Versailles.

"We have the honour of presenting ourselves at Court!" I exclaimed.

"Certainly."

"Will the King notice us, Father?"

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"He will notice if we are *not* there," replied my father rather grimly.

I had heard that, too. Among a thousand, if one were absent whose duty it was to be present, the King would surely discover that absence and visit his displeasure upon the luckless absentee.

Of course I perfectly understood that, if the Régiment d'Aulone were quartered near Versailles, it was our privilege, our duty, and our business to present ourselves at Court.

But it seemed too wonderful to be true. I never had been at Court. I was enchanted. Yet I noticed no signs of pleasure in my father who always, as I remembered, became gay and animated when orders to march were received.

"I wonder," said I, "where the Royal Regiment has gone."

"Where the Regiment Carignan went before them, I suppose," said he with a slight shrug that set the looped ribbons on his shoulders fluttering like a swarm of violet-tinted butterflies.

"Where is that?" I enquired.

"To New France, Michelle."

"New France?" I repeated, astonished.

"You've heard of it?" he enquired drily.

"Certainly."

"Canada. Quebec. Where Count Frontenac lords it over red man and white," he added in the same odd, indifferent tone.

"Oh." And, after a silence: "Do you think we may be sent there? . . . I've often desired to go."

But always the mere idea of our going to New France had seemed so fantastic, so remote, that the possibility never really had lodged in my mind.

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"What would you find amusing about such a journey, Michelle?" he asked in the polite, detached voice of one who is thinking of other matters.

"The sea."

At that he looked around at me: "Love of the sea is in our blood," he said, "but I think you had better remain at Aulone and see to the re-gilding of those lead sea-hawks on the gates—"

"*Parbleu!*" I cried. "Where you go *I* go, Monsieur le Comte!"

He smiled: "Well, as far as Versailles, perhaps—"

"Father! Are we really to sail to New France?"

At that he became serious: "I have not heard that we are to sail. I do not know, Michelle. I do not know even why we are to take over the barracks. . . . But, somehow, I have an idea that our charming cousin d'Elven knows something concerning all this. And I suspect that is the reason of her visit to Aulone."

CHAPTER IX

WE supped at nine. The Baroness wore cloth of silver with a thousand pale blue ribbons and looked an angel drifted down to earth.

Would you like to know what I wore? Well, the overdress and bodice were of ivory brocade delicately flowered with primroses and with pale green tendrils bearing tiny orange-tinted blossoms. The corsage was cut low around the neck; bordered with my mother's lace; and terminated in a long point. The sleeves were divided at the elbow displaying my chemise of finest lace. Below, the skirt of cloth and silver with mauve designs fell in a straight breadth to my instep—which was an inch too short for the mode,—but I could not bear to hide my silver slippers.

It was before the Steinkerque fashions, so I wore no scarf of lace negligently knotted, and no stiff and fluted head-dress—which horror I think old Maintenon devised, who hath devised so many horrors—but my chestnut hair lay across my forehead in a thick, short, curly fringe, and fell in a cloud of curls to the nape of my neck, covering the ears and framing my face.

I wore a little string of my mother's pearls around my neck. My stockings came to my thighs and were of primrose tint, and gartered with the same colour.

My white gloves came to my elbows; I carried a round ostrich fan which had an amber handle.

For the rest I was all over ribbons—little primrose loops and knots—for the reign of Louis the Fourteenth was the reign of ribbons—and if truly he ever did exclaim: “*I am the State,*” he might well have added: “*La Mode—c’est Moi!*”

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Will you pardon a woman, still young, for her vanity in 'displaying to you her attire? Yet, fashions change, and it may not be displeasing to you to learn what women wore in the year 1688. . . . God knows I have worn strange attire since then.

Well, we supped *à trois* in the very highest of spirits, yet with all observances; and made one another a thousand gay compliments and twice as many jests.

I learned, now, that our dainty cousin could both eat and drink. She was no toyer with a fig-bird's wing; no supercilious sipper of our golden perfumed vintages of Aulone. *Non pas!* She took a silver skewer of roasted larks stuffed with strawberries in cinnamon, and she ate them every one!

She emptied her golden cup of its golden Aulone wine; and every time it was refilled for her she emptied it again.

I could see that she was winning the passionate respect of my father who had a healthy contempt for dalliers at table.

As for me I never have dared to drink any wine as did my cousin of Elven. Certainly she was not stuffed with sawdust. Nevertheless, I experienced some uneasiness on her account; but there was no occasion for concern; for what she absorbed from dish and goblet had not the slightest effect upon her.

When we went out to the terrace where Nicole was playing upon my lute, a large, honey-yellow moon faced us above the trees.

Here, for a while, our cousin seated herself; and I on a tabouret close at her feet; for already I was in love with this new cousin and had utterly yielded to her strange enchantment.

Nicole played and sang. I took the lute and mischievously chose to sing again *The Three Princesses*.

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When I had done, my cousin flickered her eyelashes at me:

"La t'oisième c'est moi," she said; and added that I was "ado'bly saucy."

For her the letter *r* did not exist; and often *j* was *z*. "Amou', toujou'," fell softly from her lisping lips without any affectation. She remained a lovely child in voice and body. But in her mind was the wisdom of the ancient Nile.

After a time she turned and seemed to make a slight signal to my father, who rose at once. She gave him her hand, looked at me; and we walked to the house and leisurely ascended to my father's cabinet.

Here lustres were fetched and wine and sweetmeats served. Then the gilded walnut doors were closed silently upon us.

Lying back in her arm-chair like a snowflake on velvet, my cousin offered no preface to prepare us for what she had come to Aulone to say to us, but opened the matter at once.

It seemed that, since the signing of the Edict, old Maintenon's Scarronades had been increasing in number and in virulence.

Huguenots were not wanted in France. They must suffer conversion, immolation, or exile. None was too highly placed or born to evade the dragonnade. Slowly but remorselessly the persecution was creeping from province to province, from district to district, from town to town. In the end none might escape. The heretic must disappear.

We listened to her very gravely. She told us that her late husband had been of the reformed faith; that she, secretly, was inclined that way. However, she supposed it would make no difference in her case, being the widow

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of a gentleman who had resided at Versailles in a diplomatic capacity.

But what had brought her to Aulone was this: rumours from many sources indicated new Scarronade; the army was to be purged of Huguenots; God was no longer to be mocked to the pious horror of Madame de Maintenon and to the deadly peril of the King's immortal soul.

No. It mattered not how high the rank, how gallant the service, how blameless the life; the Huguenot must go.

After a silence the Baroness took my hand between hers and looked down at me where I leaned against her knees.

"Kinship is a ve'y st'ong bond," she said in her dainty, placid voice. "The family is ve'y widely scatt'ed. Ve'y few in this Kingdom. Placed, as I am, with ev'y oppo'tunity to keep my eyes and ea's open, I consid' myse'f obliged to info'm my kin when dange'ous policies p'evail."

"Cousin," said my father curiously, "what reason had you to suppose that we might be inclined to the reformed religion?"

"Cousin," said she, "it is gossip at Vesailles since this new Sca'nade is menacing the King's fo'ces on land and sea."

"Probably," said my father calmly, "they remember that my wife's family was Huguenot."

She inclined her head. Then, looking up: "And you, cousin?"

"I am inclined that way," he said simply. Suddenly through his eyes ran a blue glimmer like lightning: "Whatever way I am inclined," he said, "I hold it to be my private business, and neither Madame de Maintenon's nor the King's. . . . And I never shall tolerate any inquisition that meddles with my conscience. The Aulones deal di-

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rectly with God, and neither by way of Versailles, nor St. Cyr."

At that the Baroness flickered her lashes at him. He also smiled grimly.

"I suppose," he said, "that is why the Régiment d'Aulone is summoned to Versailles."

She nodded.

Then she told us about that host of spies which, wearing cavalry uniforms and pretending to belong to the Light Horse and the Gendarmerie, found their way into every corner where there might be something to listen to.

The King himself was ashamed of the measure, and did his uttermost to keep it concealed; and that was why he flew into such a fury with Lauzun who stumbled upon the secret. Anyway, it was certain that old Maintenon had a mass of information; and was using it.

I said, hotly: "I do not know who put it into Madame de Maintenon's pious head that God could best be served by making other people unhappy. But I know who put it into the King's head; and it is the wickedness of hell!"

The Baroness pressed my hand: "Hush, *mignone*; hush, *ma mie*," she cautioned; "like a young la'k you sing so lustily that the passing poacher may set his net fo' you."

"A servant?" I breathed.

"Ah," she murmured, "who knows where faith and honesty abide today?"

"I know both abide in you, Madame."

"Ado'ble," she murmured; then she flickered her eyes at me; "—in any case, '*aura mes amou's*,'" she added mischievously.

She rose. Care and perplexity seemed to fall from my father like a cloak as he bent gaily to salute her hand.

So compliments were said and our gratitude warmly and frankly expressed. My cousin gave me her hand and

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I conducted her to her apartment. With me adoration and ceremony were now in constant conflict. I was wild to have her take me into her arms and caress me. I think the motherless often know that passionate desire.

Servants lighted us with candles; her maids came from her bedroom carrying great silver lustres into the corridor.

"Come in," she said.

"Oh, Madame," I begged, "may I aid your maids in the disrobing?"

"Gwacious. Am I a Pwincess that you seek so humble an office, cousin?"

"Because I love you," I murmured.

She came to me, slowly, and slowly drew my head against her breast. Laid her cool lips to my brow and hair.

"Petite soeu', aura mes amou'—toujou'," she whispered.

When I returned to my father I found him his usual gay self. He was in his chamber robe and slippers, and smoking a long, straight pipe.

"What the devil have I to do with Madame de Maintenon," he said, "or she with me? I'll not bother my head concerning her or her Scarronades; and I doubt very much whether anybody has laid any disagreeable information against us. Who would? Or could?"

I racked my brains trying to think of anybody in our household capable of such baseness. "Could anybody in the regiment have gossiped or cast any suspicions upon our religious customs?" I asked my father.

"I know of nobody," he said. "Whatever religious doubts or inclinations or perplexities may secretly possess us, we certainly have come to no decision, for we attend mass and we confess us, and we observe the lean days as the King at Versailles never has troubled himself to ob-

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serve them. And he has no more dispensation in Lent than have you and I, Michelle. No more than has any man. . . . And I'd like very much to have some learned and holy man explain to me why the King can remain a saint and beget brats enough to form a regiment of guards, and their mothers a regiment of *vivandières*."

I threw back my head and laughed and laughed; and he thought it as ridiculous as I did.

"*Allons, Roussette*," he said, "*gai! gai!* More devils in hell than in France! So courage! We march where the King orders; but our souls God leads alone. Why worry, then, as long as it is He who leads?"

"I pity the King," said I, "whom old Maintenon leads by the nose; but I am not afraid of him or of her."

"Fearing God alone," he quoted, smilingly. Which was the Aulone motto.

Hearing it seemed to clear from my mind the last trace of uneasiness.

I realized I was sleepy, yawned; blushed and asked his pardon.

He merely laughed. I made my reverence; he took the stem of his pipe from his lips and kissed my forehead.

Nicole, also, was yawning beside my bed when I arrived. I suffered her ministrations drowsily. Even cold water did not revive me; and soon I lay between my sheets in somnolent luxury, striving to fix my fading thoughts upon my cousin and picture her in my mind. But she swiftly became a glimmer of pale flame, and then dwindled to a star, quenched in the first dark wave of sleep.

CHAPTER X

I WAS happy beyond expression in my companionship with my cousin who had been Athalie d'Auris of Auris-la-Vallée, and therefore cousin to the Marquise de Solanga who was cousin once removed to the Charneux-Carrasins, who were cousins to my mother.

As for my three recreant but beloved cavaliers, de Bevis, d'Auroc, and de Moidrey—well, where decency might not have restrained their ardour which my cousin's beauty and fortune instantly kindled, etiquette did. For ours is an age of etiquette and of ribbons. One endures with a curtsey, threatens with a bow, slays with a smile, dies with a *mot*. And bristling with ribbons.

The Sun-King is supposed to have set the fashion of self-control under provocation. No duelling. No brawls. It is said that never but three times in his life, so far, has he lost his temper—which includes the time that Louvois nearly died of shock.

But I know of a *fourth* time; and you shall hear about it.

They say that the King's majestic and awe-inspiring wrath, when aroused, can be compared only to the earth-rocking wrath of God Almighty.

Rubbish. It is the anger of an angry man and nothing more. He wanted to beat Courtenvaux with a little stick. He threw his stick out of the window lest he use it on Lauzun. He and his brother shouted at each other when quarrelling like two enraged peasants. . . . Rubbish!

Not that I am not afraid of the King. I am. I am afraid of all kings. And particularly of their mistresses.

I never saw our refulgent Sun-King through the dazzling glory which he is supposed to radiate.

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I had no difficulty whatever in sustaining his intent and majestic gaze which, I admit, is truly royal and very piercing.

But I looked upon him and I saw no god. I saw a man, no longer young, still handsome, perfectly constructed, whose every slightest movement was full of unstudied grace; whose manners, voice, and bearing have become a model for all gentlemen to imitate. And I saw no more than these things, and was not awed.

Though afterward—but my thread snaps and I lose myself in the labyrinth, and am stumbling sadly among memories which are becoming disorderly and no longer march in sequence—so let me grope my way back to Aulone and to my cousin, and to our three cavaliers who still politely pretend they worship me alone.

But I cared not. Infatuation for my new cousin filled me. I could not keep my eyes from her nor my ardent hands from caressing her.

The Baroness Elven was very rich; a marvellous match for any one of those three impecunious young noblemen whose last piastres had gone to purchase their companies in the Régiment d'Aulone.

I truly loved these three young men, and was very willing to see any one of them happy. But in my heart I knew that my strange and fascinating cousin never in the world would entertain any serious propositions from the families of such striplings as were these cadets.

Ah, ma cousine, delicate doll of porcelain, *I* know you are not stuffed with sawdust! *I* know that your beguiling mind is wise with the ancient wisdom of the Nile, and that your heart is as gay and valiant as any gallant heart that beats in France today.

Well, Madame la Baronne honoured Aulone with her presence for three more days before her six gray horses

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and her carmine and silver piqueurs galloped away with her to her estate at Auris-la-Vallée. Where, she told us, she was to prepare for a little voyage to London, the nature of which was to be both friendly and diplomatic.

She made no mystery of it, appearing coolly confident of our discretion. For it seemed that King James of England was now in a precious pickle. The menacing activities in Holland of his son-in-law of Orange vastly troubled him; the increasing rudeness of his parliament and people disturbed him; for now they were asking impolite questions concerning the parentage of his new-born son. Which made Mary of Modena weep.

More than that, his colonies in America were demanding aid, loudly, complaining that Count Frontenac, our Governor of Canada, was preparing to descend on New York and Boston and drive them into the sea.

Now we all know that it is the sworn policy of our King to support the Stuarts upon their throne of England.

Our Sun-King may fight England, but he never will fight the Stuarts.

So he and Maintenon and Louvois put their heads together, and presently devised this plan for reassuring King James concerning the friendliness of France to the Stuart dynasty and the amiable intentions of Count Frontenac in America:

The only son of Frontenac, Vicomte François Louis de Frontenac, was to sail to England with an agreeable and ornamental company, and carry a personal letter to King James from our *Roi Soleil*.

This should soothe and hearten him. Besides, King James loved to look upon a pretty woman. Upon any number, in fact. Monsieur de Frontenac's little embassy was selected with care in that respect. Also, this friendly

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and public attention might well serve as a hint, to the bilious Orange Prince, that France still gazed kindly upon the Stuarts.

The Breton beauty whom her parents sold into shame, and who again was resold by our most Christian King, was Duchess of Portsmouth—she, I mean, who had been Louise de Keroüelle. And she and Maintenon had now invented this coup of exquisite diplomacy.

“Admi’ble,” cooed my cousin; “the King sends the fox-cub, young F’ontenac, to them to play with while the old fox in Quebec sits watching the English geese. As we sail ac’oss the Channel we shall tu’n towa’d Holland and make ou’ reve’nces to the Pwince of O’ange. He may not accept ou’ homage, but he will notice it. As fo’ me—” she looked at us and fluttered her lovely lashes—“well, I have often walked with Kings without damage to my im-mo’tal soul.”

But my father did not think it funny that any monarch should bait his hook with any woman in whose veins a drop of our blood ran. Nor did the notorious good conduct of our cousin reconcile him to the royal impertinence.

But the Baroness, in taking leave of us, seemed far more concerned about our journey to Versailles than about her own to Whitehall.

She mentioned Noël Bouton, Marquis de Chamilly, now lieutenant-general, saying that he was a brave but unscrupulous man who was supposed to do much of Maintenon’s contemptible work.

Also there was a man named Armand de Gribouri whose rôle at Court was more or less of a mystery, but who was credited with being a gentleman-spy attached to the King’s person, and employed to watch and report upon the secret activities of those highly placed.

“Those two,” said the Baroness to me, disdainfully, “will

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find out how many bow-knots ornament your underclothes—how many ringlets are concealed among your curls, and how many times you yawn while your maid undresses you. And they will run to the King with the exact details, *ma mie!* All walls ah glass at Versailles. But”—and her eyebrows arched languidly—“it is a matter of indifference to me if se’vants see me naked, but I would not show a king my slippeh buckle.”

I could think only of a pink water-lily floating on a crystal pond, exquisite, unashamed.

Several times during the day she spoke of our regiment’s marching orders and of our going to Versailles, and it was very plain that she entertained considerable anxiety concerning us.

I remember one afternoon she wrote a letter, and sent it off by one of her piqueurs who, I noticed, had changed from her livery into sober clothing which distinguished him from no other wayfarer riding about his own affairs.

That evening she came into my father’s cabinet where he was busied with military papers, and pretended to be afraid of interrupting, but presently made him dismiss his secretary and servants, and close the doors.

When this was done she went lightly across the room and locked them, and made a perfect **O** at us with her mouth, which amused us enormously.

But my cousin drew us into a little circle so close that our knees touched, and the most discreet whisper would be audible.

She made known to us that she was seriously concerned regarding our summons to Versailles.

Intrigue, she whispered, was rampant; spies swarmed; nobody was to be trusted.

Being of our race, she said, and aware of its high principles and proud traditions, she knew that my father

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never would tolerate any insolent tampering with his private code of honour, even from the King himself.

My father smiled, but she shook her blond head and said she could foresee difficulties for us which were causing her real anxiety. Therefore, she wished us to listen very attentively and remember every word she was saying.

She said that she had sent a trusted servant to Versailles with a letter which, if it fell into wrong hands, would certainly result in her ruin, and might even cost her her life.

As a result of this letter, she informed us, a key would be made to fit a certain door in the Palace of Versailles.

She hoped fervently it need never be used.

However, if either my father or I, or both of us together, ever were summoned to the private cabinet of the Marquise de Maintenon, there would be, in the antechamber where we waited, a gentleman on guard wearing the uniform of the Blue Halberdiers.

This gentleman would give my father a key and indicate the door through which we must leave the Palace.

The mystery of all this, with its hint of unknown perils, enchanted me; but my father's eyes had become a little grave.

He said to my cousin in a guarded voice: "So you believe, Madame, that any interview with the Marquise in her cabinet is very likely to prove an unpleasant one for us? So serious, in fact, that it might become advisable for me to leave the Palace by a secret door to avoid arrest?"

"Cousin," said she, "in battle is it not advisable to be p'epa'ed?"

"I had not supposed that, in going to Versailles, I was going into battle, Madame."

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"I beg you ve'y e'nestly to suppose it eve'y moment while you continue at Ve'sailles, cousin."

He thanked her pleasantly and with smiling warmth for her advice and kindness, but reproached himself for causing her anxiety on his account and for imperilling her own future in our behalf.

Up went her finely pencilled eyebrows with a dainty shrug: "Oh, *pou' ça*—with us the family honou' counts befo' the safety of the individual."

She rose to withdraw; my father handed her to her apartment with every least detail of ceremony due to a Princess of the Blood alone.

"Michelle," he said, on his return to the cabinet where I stood awaiting him, "I am beginning to wonder whether you ought to accompany me to Versailles."

I threatened to weep. I never had, so far, when denied anything.

He laughed; and I knew I was going.

The following morning at sunrise our cousin of Elven was to leave us.

When the moment of parting arrived, her embraces and mine were endless. I wept then.

There were no tears in her eyes, but the **O** she made with her lovely mouth quivered.

We handed her into her huge armorial carrosse, and my three cavaliers, de Bevis, de Moidrey, d'Auroc, came riding up from the village to escort her as far as Ombre-de-Chevallier—for my father was a kind man, and had mercifully relieved them from regimental duties that tragic morning.

Through the rush of unwonted tears I saw horsemen in carmine and silver galloping amid golden clouds of dust where, through a fairy mist, six phantom horses fled away

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with a fairy coach into the flames of the rising sun. And, close to the coach window I saw my unfaithful gallants displaying their most brilliant horsemanship; and I saw my fairy Princess lean from the window and blow a kiss to me through the blinding glory that now engulfed them all.

A week later the Régiment d'Aulone marched for Versailles, drums beating one of Louvois' new marches; the Colonel leading and I riding beside him; mounted Captains heading their companies and Sergeants with shouldered halberds on the flanks.

Rat-a-plan! Rat-a-plan! My little cupid Colin was drumming away; and no doubt Nicole from our carrosse in the rear could hear him expressing his passion for her with flying drumsticks.

Dust rose for two miles behind the head of the column where I rode with my father. An infantry regiment on the march stretches for a long distance, what with the troops, their camp baggage, led-horses, officers' vehicles, soldiers' wives and brats, and the endless files of shabby or bedizened hangers-on who haunt and follow all regiments and armies, and gather about all camps.

Turning in my saddle to gaze back I saw the sight that always thrilled me—vistas of slanting steel shining as far as the eye could see above an endless column of white uniforms all sparkling with silver buttons.

Aulone was on the march. Our Regiment. I looked upon them; I looked at my father, riding in his careless pride, and saw the Aulone gaiety shining in his eyes.

"Fearing God alone."

Not for an Aulone the dread of kings—not fear of their mistresses, nor of Maintenon, nor Chamilly, nor of this Gribouri. . . .

I scarcely know what caused me to think of it at the

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moment, but I leaned from my saddle and asked my father in a guarded voice whether he had included our Huguenot Bible among our effects.

He nodded.

"And the prayer-book and hymnal?"

"Certainly!"

I thought about Monsieur Gribouri and the exact number of ribbons on my chemise.

Of our march to Versailles I have nothing remarkable to relate. It was more agreeable than many marches which I had made with the Régiment d'Aulone. The weather was fine; the troops well hardened and in good condition. We made about fifteen miles every day over excellent roads; and could have made more, but there was no haste.

Estafettes arrived and departed between Versailles and our camps every day—I suppose to report our progress and condition and the number of miles covered each étape.

Every evening a tent for me was pitched adjoining my father's tent. Camp life is agreeable to me. I liked to sit at the tent door and watch the sun go down and smell the odours of charcoal fires and soup kettles and watch all this throng of soldiers going about their various duties, carrying forage and fuel, preparing meat and vegetables, leading horses to water.

A French regiment is a gay regiment. Always some soldier was singing; always somebody cutting capers, playing pranks; sometimes disputing, though our discipline was good.

At one o'clock we always halted to dine. My father and I dined alone together.

At nine, after the standards had been brought to my father's quarters, we supped; and our captains supped

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with us. It always went merrily; our wine was always good and our table excellent. We were like members of one family, light-hearted, animated, but never forgetting ceremony or military respect.

Sometimes, with my father, I made a tour of the tents, which always interested me because nearly every soldier in the regiment was a friend of mine.

Sometimes we visited the wagon lines or the neat tent of the vivandière, or the odd, patched-up abris where the soldiers' wives camped. But it saddened me even to glance toward those gipsy carts and canvas sheds where the camp followers were gathered—and there were young faces among them painted too boldly, yet not without a dreadful sort of beauty. . . . Mary Mother! in what strange masks goes that phantom which man calls Love!

Sometimes, when the moon shone, I sat outside my tent and played my lute and sang. And it was permitted our soldiers to gather to listen if they chose; and how many, many times have I seen them, in the lantern light, standing at a respectful distance whilst I sang some old, forgotten song of the Fourth Henry's time, or some impudent chansonette made yesterday.

Sometimes we played at cards—ombre, usually—but my father's rules concerning gambling were very strict, and nobody lost more than he could well afford.

And, every evening, when the sentries were posted and our tent flaps fastened for the night, by candle light my father and I read in the Huguenot Bible and their Book of Prayer, wondering and troubled by the beauties therein revealed.

On the twenty-first day of June our Regiment arrived at Versailles and marched into the barracks—a long, severe building among trees, with a handsome pavilion for the

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Colonel standing some little distance to the east behind a garden wall, and another to the west for the remaining officers.

In our pavilion my father had a suite of four rooms; I had three. There was a pretty salon, a dining room; our servants slept overhead.

We arrived about sunset. I was greatly excited. I stood at the window and gazed at the passers-by and the chairs and coaches.

Never had I seen so many gorgeous uniforms—not even during a campaign.

Red, blue, white, green—and most of them covered with gold and silver!—cavalry of the Blue Body Guards who wore red breeches and black boots; light horsemen in scarlet; musketeers riding gray horses; others riding black ones—the famous Gray and Black Musketeers; and there were Red Gendarmes and Red Infantry; and cavalry with blue and silver coats who carried both carbine and sword.

I saw halberdiers of the Body Guard, Gate-Guards, Provost-Guards, Axe-men, and even a tall, solemn Swiss in his sixteenth century uniform of ruff and parti-coloured doublet faced with scarlet and gold.

Ventre-saint-gris! as the Fourth Henry would have exclaimed, it was a gallant sight for a young girl's eyes, for, oh, Holy Mary! these officers were very handsome. And such marvellously painted and gilded chairs with the bearers more brilliant than I had even pictured the King!—and such glimpses of lovely faces behind the glittering window-glass!

And everywhere everybody was bowing to everybody else, and beautiful gentlemen walked hat in hand beside the chairs or pranced their superb horses alongside of gilded carrosses. . . .

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"Oh, my father!" said I, reaching behind me to take tight hold of his hand, "I adore Versailles and desire to mingle with it as soon as may be, though God only knows whether my clothing be suitable. . . ."

"Have no concern, Roussette," he said, laughing, "we shall arrange all that if it ruins us."

As he was already ruined I rather wondered. But I say to you very candidly that it seems to make no difference at Versailles; and whether a gentleman be ruined or not he is obliged to live brilliantly and dress magnificently because the Sun-King will tolerate nothing else.

No; we were obliged to present ourselves at Court or feel the King's displeasure; and therefore we were obliged to dress suitably. . . . I still wonder who finally paid our bills. Not old Maintenon, I vow! No. She was the only living human being who dared economize at Court. And, when she desired to offer the King a fête, why, she lined up her brats at St. Cyr and made them render Racine's *Esther* to tickle the royal ears. . . .

Alas! I hear you say: "*Fie donc!* Mademoiselle de Maniscamp, you are a cat because you scratch like one!"

Kind friends, I have claws. Why should I sheath them when the Marquise de Maintenon passes across these pages?

Why should I paint her other than she was and is? No; I have pledged my honour to write the truth. You shall see that I spare nobody—not even myself.

Well, we had not been in Versailles an hour before our credentials arrived and at a gallop.

Brissac, major of the body-guards, had sent Courtenvaux with them.

We were expected to present ourselves at Court.

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From my window I saw the commandant of the Swiss leave our pavilion and mount his horse and canter away toward the palace followed by two red troopers.

My father came into my apartment laughing. "That was Lauzun's son," he remarked; "it seems that business is despatched very promptly at Versailles."

Two things, if no others, recommend the King to the respect of mankind. He is a great worker—the most industrious man in the world. Also he loves the open air in any weather—heat, snow, wind, rain—nothing makes any difference to him.

He is indefatigable, he is prompt, his programme always is the same. One need not consult one's watch to learn what hour of the day it is; one need only observe what the King is doing. For he never varies by five minutes the hours devoted either to his business or his pleasures.

"Tomorrow," said my father, "we show ourselves, as in duty bound. In the evening we are bidden to a concert at the palace."

"Holy Virgin," thought I, "and I have absolutely nothing fit to wear!"

My father, who was leisurely pacing the room as though busy with his thoughts, presently took me by the hand and led me to one of the windows which gave on the east.

Beyond the wall of our garden I saw a sort of park set with clumps of chestnut trees. In this park stood a large, plain structure, not very ancient.

"That," said my father, "is the Convent of the Recollette Nuns. Always remember, Michelle, that in case of trouble any woman of our race has right of asylum there, and always may claim sanctuary."

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"I know," said I, laughing, "but I am not likely to run away from anybody at Versailles. On the contrary, I mean to pursue every handsome young man I see."

We were very merry over the idea.

CHAPTER XI

WELL, it is over! I have seen the Sun-King. and he has seen me. Twice!

The first time was when he was passing from his cabinet to his chamber before the hour of dinner which was one o'clock.

Courtenvaux very politely conducted us, through a wonderland of gilded gates and marble courts, to Brissac, who received us even more politely and carried us to the beautiful antechamber called the Bull's Eye where a brilliant throng of ladies and gentlemen were gathering.

Here we gave our names; and, when the gold and white doors were opened, we went in with the rest and were ranged by the gentlemen ushers according to our consequence and rank.

I saw several very beautiful ladies regarding me with polite but amiable curiosity; I saw distinguished looking gentlemen recognize my father and speak to him ceremoniously. All around me was a flutter of ribbons and a musical hum of conversation. The deep, panelled recesses were full of charming women all stirring like bouquets of flowers; there was a rustle of brocaded coats and gilded swords, and the discreet tap of silk-shod feet on the polished parquet—

“Gentlemen, the King!”

I saw two figures in blue and silver coming. Then I saw the King.

He wore brown heavily overlaid with gold. Behind him came the Captain of his Guard.

I never shall see more perfect grace than characterized

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his progress through the lane of courtiers. There was a great throng; but I know he saw every person there, and noted the absence of those who should have been there.

I watched and waited. He was nearing my father, now. As he was passing he looked up; my father bowed.

The bow of the King was exactly, to a shade, what an Aulone was entitled to, but I thought the King's features had grown a trifle grave.

The King said with his faultless courtesy: "It is some time since you have presented yourself at Court, Monsieur d'Aulone."

"Sire," replied my father, "Your Majesty knows why."

"Yes," said the King, "your regiment has been on distant service. . . ." As he spoke his leisurely moving gaze encountered mine. . . .

Well, the Aulones, I hope, will always endeavour to match the perfect courtesy of the King's bow. With my deepest reverence I did my best for the honour of Aulone.

Many ladies were looking at me; I felt the cool and brilliant curiosity of their gaze.

I do not know how the King knew me. Nobody whispered to him; and he questioned nobody.

He said to me: "Mademoiselle de Maniscamp, I hope you like Versailles."

"Sire," I replied, "it is full of *sunshine*, and I adore the *sun*."

At that he smiled and said that I should see the gardens and the fountains.

"I am not hunting today," he said, "and I shall walk by the Basin of Latona and the Colonnade."

The indirect command was charming. There was friendliness in this face as he passed on, speaking to others here and there.

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When he passed out we all followed. He would, as usual, dine alone at his square table by the window; then return to his chamber, to his cabinet, and from thence, descend to take the air in the park of Versailles.

In the antechamber of the Bull's Eye my father joined me:

"Eh bien, Michelle?" he enquired.

"A mirror for all gentlemen," I said. . . . "Oh, Holy Virgin, I begin to understand some things I never understood. . . ."

"Which," interposed my father, "we shall not discuss at present. . . ."

The Duc de Saint Simon, passing, saluted my father and me with precisely the respect due from a peer of France to the Count d'Aulone.

When he had trotted on my father named him to me and added: "That is all that his brain is stuffed with—court etiquette and the privileges of peers. . . . He is the busiest little man in France who accomplishes nothing at all."

Lauzun—who longed to be a Duke, and was determined to be one—passed with Courtenvaux.

He had the features and complexion of a skinned rabbit, and was small; but his reputation for gallantries was enormous.

He made us too many bows—having observed the way the wind blew when the King condescended to notice us so amiably—and I was left wondering what Mademoiselle de Montpensier could see in this little, livid man to so obsess her with tender passion.

The Marquis de Chamilly approached us followed by a handsome gentleman with dark, regular features: and I was aware that my father's sleeve had discreetly brushed by my elbow as a signal for discretion.

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Noël Bouton, Marquis de Chamilly, was a fresh-faced, blue-eyed man below middle height, whose address and manners, while courteous, retained the abruptness of the battle field and camp.

He and my father stood in conversation for a moment, recalling incidents which occurred when the Marquis was serving with Schomburg's cavalry.

The dark, handsome gentleman was Armand Gribouri, and he devoted himself to me.

He was extremely entertaining; seemed to know all about our regiment and its service.

I ventured to ask him if he knew where we were to be ordered; and he said with apparent carelessness that he supposed we would be sent either to the Palatinate or to enforce the Edict in some rebellious Huguenot district.

I knew he was going to look intently at me in a moment, but I could not control the deep flush of surprise and resentment that began to burn in my cheeks.

When they had taken their leave of us my father gave me his hand and we descended to the court and moved toward the gates beyond which our carrosse awaited us.

My father listened with knitted brows when I repeated Gribouri's apropos; but he said nothing; and we mounted into our carrosse and returned to our pavilion to dinner.

My father seemed light-hearted enough. He rallied me on my conquest of Lauzun and seemed much amused at what he was pleased to mention as the stir which my beauty had made in the *Æil-de-Bœuf*.

"For," said he, "whether you noticed them or not, there were a score of young fellows circling restlessly around you, and every woman there was regarding you with benevolence or jealousy characteristic of her mind and heart."

"You tell me too late," said I, gaily, "for, had I noticed

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these young men, not one should have escaped me. Oh, my father!—they *are* handsome; and I desire very much to make what conquests I may while the sun shines.”

He threw back his head and laughed: “You already have begun the harvest, Michelle. Only I warn you, have a care of your own heart; for, if things go well, I shall venture to ask, in high places, that your future be properly secured by marriage.”

I knew he meant that it was the business of the King to occupy himself with such an office—our rank entitling us to expect such interest from him.

But I begged my father to be in no haste, saying that I desired to frisk in the sun before retiring to conjugal shades; and I promised fervently that I never would permit my heart to experience a dangerous pang before I met my destined husband face to face.

“And God grant,” I added candidly, “that those same pangs seize me then—if ever they are to seize me—for I am not fashioned for duplicity and shall remain chaste though I wed a man with a pig’s head like the girl in the Palatinate. . . .”

My father shouted with laughter.

CHAPTER XII

MARY MOTHER! has any mortal ever dreamed of such earthly loveliness as the Versailles gardens possess—what with the flashing fountains and silver lakes, the sun-flecked groves and green-swards, the naked marble gods amid the shadow; the endless thickets of flowers. . . .

All the nobility and beauty of the Court were there in a thousand rainbow tints to frame the King where in brocade^d radiance he walked—a golden flame surrounded by a thousand brilliant moths.

It seemed as though I strolled through blessed throngs in Paradise. Many spoke to me and named themselves; others presented others; ladies seemed kind; gentlemen kinder; my small head was awlirl; my eyes dazzled; my heart sang glory to God and good will toward man.

Twice the King noticed me and took his hat all the way off.

The second time, he said to me: "Your cousin of Elven is charming, but I was not before aware that charm and beauty characterized your race."

"Sire," said I, "where the sun falls blossoms open."

"All are not charming, Mademoiselle."

"The sun withers the weeds, Sire."

"Sometimes it ripens them and they go to seed," he said. . . . "And the seed spreads; and crowds out flowers." He smiled at me: "—and then what is to be done, Mademoiselle?"

I knew what he meant but I made no reply, and he answered his own question.

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"Fire," he said very quietly. "And when the weeds are burned—a new plowing."

Then he smiled, took my hand, led me to the water's edge, and showed me the gilded gondolas.

Never was so delicate a warning given; never, I think, did any human being ever stand so closely to the precipice and gaze upon destruction below which the slightest mis-step must surely bring.

But beyond, to the world's ends, lay the riches of the earth—security, ease, honours, and a wide smooth road descending.

With charming grace the King consigned me to Lauzun; and, before I realized it, I was curtseying to the Marquise de Maintenon beside her chair.

I have spoken of her as old Maintenon. On this afternoon when I first laid eyes on her she was fifty-three; and looked thirty.

Hers was the whitest and pinkest natural complexion that ever I have seen. No flaw; no wrinkle. She was beautiful; her features finely formed and very delicate; her voice so low and gentle that it seemed almost timid; and, in her eyes, the vague, lost sweetness of a nun.

At her gentle, hesitating command I walked beside her chair as it advanced slowly, abreast of the King.

She addressed a few questions to me concerning my impressions of Versailles; said that I must visit St. Cyr some day; spoke of the young girls there, of Père La Chaise.

That was all. Curtseying and stepping aside and back, I discovered Monsieur Gribouri in attendance, hat in hand, his little black eager eyes fixed on me.

Like other gentlemen he wore the slightest trace of a mustache; his periwig presented a mass of black curls; his skin seemed so dark that it looked bronzed by the weather.

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He was, in a manner, extremely handsome, save for his lips which were too red and thick.

He made me a thousand compliments upon my appearance, my wit, my certain popularity at Versailles which must follow not only from my own merits but from the notice taken of me by the King and by the Marquise de Maintenon.

For all these extravagant civilities I thanked him. A throng of young men approached us—Holy Mary, they were beautiful!—and I was heavenly happy, as is any girl who finds herself so courted and besieged. For this young gentleman desired to show me the Baths of Apollo, and that young gentleman the Labyrinth; another offered to conduct me to the Colonnade; another wished me to inspect the Trianon. I wanted to do all these things, but did not know how to set about it without giving offence to all save the cavalier I selected; so only promised every gentleman that I would submit to his kind guidance another day. And always—no matter how assiduous my cavaliers or how pressing the brilliant company surrounding me—always at my side I discovered Monsieur Gri-bouri, hat in hand, and his ardent eyes seeking mine.

Well, when the King had taken into his lungs sufficient air to suit him, he retraced his steps to the Palace; and we with him.

Both he and Madame de Maintenon had plenty more to do before appearing at the concert at the Ambassador's Staircase.

And, when at last I rejoined my father and drove back to our pavilion, I had experienced a thousand new sensations of delight. All the way back I scarcely spoke, striving to recollect young men's names and the promises I had made to each.

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In my little apartment I lay blissfully on my chaise-longue submitting to the ministrations of Nicole; and murmuring of glories transcendent and of Kings and flowers and fountains and young men.

Also I demanded my carnet whereon I had written certain notes for my guidance such as:

“Beware! The King does not like perfumes.

“Be careful not to laugh in the *Œil-de-Bœuf*; smile only; the King does not like noise.

“Never sit down unless asked to; and *then* never fail to sit down.

“If the Duchesse d’Harcourt behaves vulgarly do not seem astonished.

“Be sure to let Monsieur de Saint Simon see very plainly that you consider a Duke of next importance to God Almighty and the King.

“If a young man presses your hand or kisses it with a little more fervour than etiquette requires, try neither to blush nor wholly to ignore it. A fool does both.

“If a young man attempts to slip a billet doux into your fingers, for God’s sake don’t let it drop. But also, for God’s sake, always show it to your father.” Etc.

There was in our pavilion no bath like ours at Aulone. Nicole fetched a large basin, and in it I stood and permitted her to bathe me.

While she was doing my hair I fell asleep, made drowsy from sheer sustained excitement.

When I awoke I discovered that my room was full of flowers. There must have been a score of beautiful bouquets from which ribbons of every hue fell. My admirers were becoming gallant.

My sleep seemed to have cleared and steadied my mind. I lay upon my bed, reflecting, and thinking particularly about what the King had said to me about weeds and

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plows. Also I considered how I had been passed from the King to Monsieur Gribouri; from him to the Marquise de Maintenon; from her back to Gribouri; and by him distributed among some score or more of admiring cavaliers.

I got out of bed, put on slippers and a silk chamber robe, and went out and across the corridor, and scratched at my father's door. (We never knock at a door in Versailles; we scratch very softly on the wood with our finger tips.)

I heard my father laughing as Alzac, his valet-de-chambre, admitted me. He had dressed my father's hair and now was shaving him; so I seated myself until that office was accomplished and we could be alone.

My father had been for a gallop in the forest with Chamilly.

"A talkative gentleman," he remarked, "and is very sure to be named Marshal of France, one day. He showed plenty of courage in Schomburg's cavalry, and some ability before Strasbourg. But I don't believe a good soldier can be a good courtier. *I couldn't.*"

Alzac went out with the basin; returned with several lace cravats. My father selected one, and fastened it himself before the mirror.

I thought he was the most distinguished looking man in Versailles excepting the King.

When Alzac finally had retired and closed the door, I told my father what the King had said to me about weeds and seeds and fire and plow; and how I had been passed about between the King, Madame de Maintenon, and Monsieur Gribouri.

My father listened attentively. He seemed deeply interested but not disturbed.

"This Gribouri," he said, "seems to be the King's

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shadow. He isn't anybody. But that doesn't mean he may not become somebody.

"He passes for one of those inexplicable familiars sometimes seen at courts who seem to have no office, no authority, no reason for being there other than the toleration of the King. In other words, a spy.

"I think he is one. I think Chamilly is another. As far as that goes, the essence of all courts is intrigue, and everybody spies upon everybody else. But Gribouri and Chamilly, I believe, are bought soul and body, by those they serve. The King and Madame de Maintenon.

"What do they want as reward? Well, Chamilly desires money and a marshal's baton. He'd sell his soul for these."

"And Gribouri?" I asked.

My father smiled: "You seem to think I know all the gossip. Well—Monsieur Gribouri very passionately desires to be sent as Intendant to Quebec."

"Why," said I, "is that office so honourable?"

"Not at all. The Count de Frontenac is Governor of New France—or Canada, as they now call it. The Governor is supreme; the Intendant merely a sort of check upon him—a consulting official—in plain words, a royal spy who keeps the King informed concerning the Governor's conduct."

"It seems to be an ignoble office," I said.

"But carries vast possibilities for acquiring great wealth, Michelle."

"How?"

"In the fur trade."

"But—is such wealth to be acquired honestly?"

My father laughed: "No; corruptly. . . . Well, I have told you what is the dearest wish of Monsieur Gribouri. And I have no doubt he is doing his very best in the

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King's employment to earn the office of Intendant at Quebec."

After a silence: "Do you suppose Monsieur Gribouri is spying upon us?" I asked.

"Probably."

"To what purpose?"

My father shrugged; but he knew, now, as well as I, that we were suspected of a tendency toward the reformed faith.

I reminded him of what Gribouri had said regarding the possible destination of the Régiment d'Aulone.

"There is a bridge," said my father, "which I shall know how to cross if ever I come to it."

In his calm voice sounded a metallic undertone that rang faintly like a distant unsheathing of swords.

When Nicole and Nanon had arrayed me in my best and newest—alas, not so new!—and when upon my fingers, arms and neck blazed every jewel my mother and my grandmother ever had possessed, I descended the staircase and went out into our little garden, and opened the gate, and started across the grass, following the dry paved walk to the barracks where our soldiers were quartered.

As I have told you before, every soldier in our Regiment of Aulone was a friend of mine; and I thought that they might wish to see me in my jewels before my father and I started for the concert at the Palace.

The Regiment was fond of me in its own fashion. The soldiers even had made a little song about me, though they were too respectful to sing it when my father or I were within earshot.

But Nicole had learned the words from somebody—perhaps her scamp of a drummer boy—and I insisted that

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she sing the song to me. It frightened her to do so but she did.

The song was called *Roussette*; and the saucy refrain runs thus:

*To thee, Roussette,
Our own Roussette,
What Oriflammes of War compare?
What Royal Standard, lily-fair,
Can vie with thy red hair, Roussette?
Beneath thy flaming flag we dare
Defy the devil in his lair
And storm through hell itself, Roussette!*

Very impudent but piquante; and I sang it to my father who laughed till he wept.

You see, then, what terms were we on, our Regiment and I.

Well, the sentry presented arms, and while he stood at attention I showed him my dress and jewels. Then another sentry discovered me and the main guard turned out; and I displayed my gala magnificence to them. I now saw my friend, Sergeant Boufflon, my old riding master, and I called to him to have the guard-lanterns lighted and tell the men I wished them to drink my health on the occasion of my first fête at Versailles.

Everywhere our soldiers were coming up through the lantern-lit dusk to admire the jewelled magnificence of their Colonel's daughter, or—as they doubtless spoke of me in private—*La Roussette*.

I had brought two purses which were stuffed with gold. One I gave to Sergeant Boufflon to buy what casks of wine were needed to drink my health; the other I reserved for my own use because, if there was to be a

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party after the concert, I meant to play at lansquenet if it ruined me.

Sergeant Boufflon, who had a very large mustache, kept twisting it up like the horns on a cow, and assuring me that no Princess in France could ever hope to compare with me in clothing, jewels, or beauty.

So, very happy, and beginning to be afraid that I might be detaining my father, I ran back along the paved path, and into our garden, where, through the grille, I saw our carrosse just driving up.

How can I describe the concert at the Ambassador's Staircase! That flight of marble steps which are lovely enough to lead to heaven!—the great curved balustrades where the beauty, wealth and nobility of France were gathering—one vast moving garden of blossoms, swaying among ranks of solid silver benches and chairs!

And then, when the King entered—Mary Mother!—he was in cloth of gold and blazing with diamonds from head to foot!

And what music! Instantly I seemed to be drifting above the floor and up toward paradise. It was Lulli's "La Chaste Diane," I think. God knows what they played. But all around me the sea of flower-like faces faded to a fog of rose and silver; staircase, columns, gilded pilasters, the fountain, the marble effigy above it, the two vast tapestries, all grew vague and unreal, dissolving into tinted mist. Only the music made me feel I was alive and conscious—that, and the fragrance of the orange trees in heavy bloom.

I have no clear memory of all that followed—only that I played lansquenet at one of many little tables, and that the King sauntered leisurely about to watch the play and would not let us rise out of respect.

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He had a little dog in his arms. Monsieur Gribouri carried another for him.

It appeared to me as though scores of young men were speaking to me all the while or whispering advice at my ear. But, somehow, always Monsieur Gribouri seemed to be there too.

There was much gaiety, but no loud laughter.

I won; lost; I lost more; I was not recouping.

Monsieur Gribouri was ever at my elbow, not importunate in zeal, not in any way annoying but—well, always he was there.

Many gathered to see Lauzun's coldly reckless play. Always vast sums changed hands at any table where he sat; but he had made a fortune at play, they say.

When I had no more gold pieces remaining I went away by myself where there were iced wines and other refreshments, and where I saw they were dancing.

I was not surprised that it should be Gribouri who served me and seated me.

I sat with my wine glass in my hand listening to the charming music and watching the dancers. After a while I raised my eyes to Monsieur Gribouri. His lips were too red and too thick. For all that he was handsome. I felt the heat of a slight flush on my cheeks, which was a faint sort of shame that I should find him handsome in spite of his mouth.

We conversed. Afterward we danced. It was in quadrilateral that we danced to the dreamy music of Lulli's ballet-opera, "The Triumph of Love"—that same piece wherein, when first given at St. Germain, the Royal Princes took part.

I had no lack of gallants; always they arrived with ceremony and compliments, lingered, only to find them-

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selves replaced by new arrivals. But always Gribouri remained.

I think, from the very first, I was faintly conscious of the magnetism of this young man. And also, very faintly, realized that I should have no feeling at all concerning him. Or for any man whose mere presence seemed to radiate so subtle and vigorous a personality, a living, breathing bodily personality, with nothing further—so far as I had yet discovered—to recommend him.

Even now, vaguely and deep within me, I was aware of an unease.

Now and then I stole a look at him because I could not understand how I could waste two thoughts upon a man with such a mouth. . . . As sensual as a faun's.

My father said he was a nobody. No; he was not that. Not exactly a cipher. There was strength in him—of some sort. Potential power for something. Those virile black eyes were not the eyes of a mere nobody. That smooth bronzed skin where the blood pulsed in the cheek. . . .

Suddenly I had enough of my thoughts, and I stood up—to find myself confronting him—level with the dark, eager ardour of his eyes. . . .

Throughout my whole body my blood tingled and seemed to lash me across both cheeks.

CHAPTER XIII

I WALKED leisurely across to where I saw my father conversing with Chamilly and other general officers.

Turning, I thanked Monsieur Gribouri with every circumstance and ceremony suitable—but no more than was exactly suitable from an Aulone to a young gentleman who called himself Gribouri.

Then I rested my hand within my father's arm, quite willing to retire when he thought fit to take his leave.

As I stood there listening to the conversation which sometimes touched upon the sinister activities of Holland, sometimes dwelt upon the increasing embarrassments of King James of England, always out of the tail of my eye I was aware that Gribouri loitered not far away, and that his eyes had never left me. I did not look at him; but, at moments, I seemed actually to feel his gaze: there was an intensity in it of which I was physically sensible—as when the ray of a burning glass falls upon a delicate skin.

That this was a conquest I knew in a confused way—the conquest of a man very different from any man I ever had known before. But there was no gaiety in my heart, no lightness, no sense of harmless triumph, but an instinctive shrinking. And this was not aversion; certainly not fear: it seemed to arise from a deep, natural unwillingness to let this young man occupy a single thought of mine.

While I stood there, there arose in the room a sort of spontaneous stirring and murmur; and some left the card tables and ballroom and others turned and moved toward the windows.

The Marquis de Chamilly said to me: "The park is

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illuminated, Mademoiselle, and it always is worth a glance. . . .”

He gave me his tiny hand which appeared too small to wield a sword, and very gracefully he conducted me as our little group walked through the salon, antechambers, splendid halls where blue halberdiers mounted guard. Others, too, were moving thither: everywhere sounded the discreet click of scarlet heels and the rustle of brocade.

As I arrived at an open window I saw the night sky was full of fiery serpents. Everywhere they swarmed and darted and wriggled, extinguishing the stars.

Then great lurid pillars of crimson fire towered skyward above the trees; the basin of Latona vomited sheets of green and golden flame; the turbulent fountains tumbled into glowing pools which rocked and flashed in jewelled splendour.

As a rainbow dissolves and fades away, so slowly vanished the blazing pageant—to reveal a fairyland of lake and park and forest all twinkling with tiny star-like points of light.

And everywhere, through this dimly jewelled enchantment, pale, magic shapes glided like nymphs; now glimmering in ghostly dances on the sward, now playing, fleeing, pursuing from tree to tree, now crouching amid the reeds and lilies along the water's edge where spectral swans sailed through raining spray.

As I stole out to the terrace for a nearer view, through the enchantment I became conscious of Gribouri, turned involuntarily to learn if instinct had played me a trick, and met his burning eyes.

“The old gods at play once more,” he murmured; “Greece lives again tonight; Olympus peoples yonder groves with dryad, nymph, and faun, and with every god and goddess of antiquity.”

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After a silence: "Doubtless," said I innocently, "Mars is there wearing armour forged in Augsburg."

"Your wit is sibylline, Mademoiselle. For what your voice of velvet flutes tonight may be blasted abroad to-morrow through brazen trumpets."

"Monsieur, I spoke at hazard only."

"Some call such prophecy inspiration."

I laughed.

I know not if it were of my own impulse or merely my assent that we moved out into the June night where others now thronged terrace and steps.

Presently lights glowed behind us and the silken crowd parted as the chair of Madame de Maintenon advanced.

The King sauntered beside it; the Court closed in behind and swarmed after him.

As we approached the Basin of Latona we heard music; the far sound of singing in the woods; soft voices; laughter; splashing of fountain and cascade.

Torches were extinguished; figures turned ghostly. There came sudden stirrings in the flowering thickets, scurrying among the trees; glimpses of pale shapes flitting from shade to shadow.

And now I heard the near ripple of water, and saw in the dusk a slender, naked, wading shape whose wet dark hair dripped water-lilies.

Suddenly a horn sounded close to us; and all the pool was agitated by fleeing figures splashing shoreward as the tritons chased them, while Neptune himself reared up in the fountain's spray brandishing his trident over all.

We stood where four woodland paths met at a garlanded pedestal upon which, high above us, a marble Eros had just alighted.

In the lustre of the sky where he stood poised a-tip-toe,

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his marble wings seemed to shimmer and quiver still.

I lifted my eyes to him still wonder-wide; I gazed around me through the scented dusk. Then, in silence, I looked at the young man who leaned against the pedestal of this ancient god as yet unknown to me.

In the stillness he spoke. His voice was low, musically controlled, not tender at first:

"All my life," he said, "I have been poor. Little by little I am making my way. What I do today to earn my bread, tomorrow I may blush for."

His graceful figure detached itself from the marble and came nearer.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "before ever I knew you except by name alone, I had only one faith, and that was in my lucky star; only one belief, and that was in myself; only one allegiance, and that was to my King.

"Today all that is changed."

"I hope, Monsieur," said I, "that faith and belief in self have developed into faith in God."

"In *you*."

"Monsieur!"

"Do you wish the truth?"

"Monsieur, I wish nothing. . . ."

"And I, everything!" he said in a voice struggling for control. "Before I saw you, Mademoiselle, I did not believe there existed a human being who could turn me from my ambition or swerve my purpose!"

"I do not desire to swerve you, Monsieur. . . ."

"Hear me, I beg of you! Position, preferment, wealth, power—these were the gods my ambition worshiped. Yesterday I still worshiped, offering my soul and body on these altars. . . ."

He opened his arms in a peculiarly graceful gesture, stood motionless, then his arms fell slowly to his side:

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"What am I to do?" he said. "I owe allegiance to my King. And am ready to betray him in this hour—for your sake. . . ."

"Have a care what you are saying, Monsieur!" I cried in a stifled voice. But he was on his knees at my feet, and had my robe's embroidered edge crushed to his lips.

"As God sees me at your feet," he whispered in a voice tremulous with passion, "love hath stricken me like a swift sword, through flesh and bone to the depths where hides my soul. . . ."

I could not clear my clothing of his grasp; I begged him to let me go; set both hands against him to push myself free—and instantly he was on his feet, and I in his arms, and his mouth met mine. . . .

Against the outrageous sensation of my first embrace I struggled in dazed fury, till my crushed body failed me. Then, of a sudden came the first flash of passion that ever I had known; for an instant, with flaming cheeks, I suffered his embrace; then wrenched myself from him and stood apart and rigid while a vast and raging confusion swept me, wave after wave.

Well, I promised to tell you the truth. I have not spared myself.

I was not frightened; I was both dazed and excited, and enraged at myself—for I did not loathe this young man, I could not seem to. Hatred blazed; but it was for what we had done. The sin of it.

In the intense stillness I heard him sigh. Then, at last, I turned on him like a young tigress.

"What do you want of me!" I whispered fiercely. "Are you gone mad, who have dared take what the King himself could not have ventured!"

I took my handkerchief and wiped my lips in fury, watching him all the while.

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"What do you want of me!" I repeated. "Love? Well, then, you never shall have it either in marriage or outside of it!"

"In the name of pity listen to me, Mademoiselle. . . ."

"What is there left to listen to after such shame. . . ."

"Confession!"

"Do you take me for a priest, Monsieur?"

"I am saying to you what I dare not say to any priest. . . . That you stand tonight in danger."

"There is none," said I; "you flatter yourself."

"And I tell you that your destruction is being planned at this hour," he said in a low, tense voice.

"Are you really planning it, Monsieur Gribouri?" I enquired disdainfully; but he came close to me and stood with brown hands clasping and twisting:

"In God's name listen," he said; "I am throwing at your feet my hope, my career, my future, my very life, when I tell you that you and Monsieur le Comte your father are at this hour in deadly peril!"

"What do you mean?" said I coldly.

"I mean that the Régiment d'Aulone is to march against the Huguenots!"

My whole body stiffened.

"Now do you understand?" he said, "what I, who had been devoted to your destruction, have done for you? . . . Because I love you."

After a moment I nodded, slowly, repeating: "Because you love me. Oh. And that is why you tell me you have spied upon us, Monsieur? Because you love me? Oh. . . . And that is why the King's spy betrays the King? Because of love? Oh."

"My life is in your hands at this hour," he said.

"It is quite safe, Monsieur Gribouri. Shall I instruct

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you why? Because an Aulone never betrays anybody. . . . Neither for love nor for anything."

"You are very hard, Mademoiselle. I fling my life at your feet. . . ."

"Keep it, Monsieur. . . ."

"—To save you. . . ."

"Save me?"

"—and the Count, your father. . . ."

I laughed: "Why, sir, God alone saves souls—which is the only substance in our bodies that matters to my father and to me. Therefore, Monsieur, be assured that we shall remain entirely tranquil in our minds whatever happens to our bodies."

He stood twisting his brown, nervous hands and staring at me out of eyes that seemed to agonize.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "I beg that you and your father will disclaim the Huguenot Bible and heretic prayer-book which have been discovered among your possessions."

My blood froze. When I could control my voice:

"Monsieur," I said, "to whom, then, would you have us ascribe possession of these volumes?"

"To anybody—your maid—some servant—what does it matter?" he said eagerly. "I am pleading with you in Heaven's name to show no stiffness; to submit—no matter what secret faith your family may entertain. . . ."

"Oh. . . . And march our regiment against the Huguenots?"

"You must! And you need not make it a dragonnade, nor. . . ."

"—nor any Scarronade?"

"My God," he whispered, "that word would lose you utterly!"

"Oh. Well, then, what polite expression may be em-

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ployed to characterize the activity of the King's mistress. . . ."

"Are you mad!" he said hoarsely. "She has been the King's wedded wife for six years! And never had been his mistress. Never!"

Though, somehow, I seemed to know that he spoke the truth, it confounded and bewildered me.

"And I tell you," he added almost fiercely, "that it is she and Père La Chaise and Louvois who are determined to rid France of Huguenots, and who have persuaded the King. And it is in *their* service that I am engaged. Now do you comprehend my warning? Now do you understand my sacrifice?—the depth of my passion for you? What I am doing to save you in this hour—you who in another hour may give me to the Captain of the King's Guard? Which must end all for me."

After a moment I said to him quietly: "What is it, Monsieur, that you wish me to do?"

"Submit. Reaffirm your faith. Believe in me. Strive to care for me. Hope for me. Encourage my ambition. Aid me to advancement. You can! The King lends you his countenance. The Court has witnessed his condescension toward you. All your future lies in sunlight. You have only to advance—and aid me to mount with you. Louvois will help me; Chamilly will help me; freed of suspicion, the Marquise will help you."

But I began to be very weary of this young man's eager voice instructing a woman of my race concerning her conscience and her duty.

Already, along the water, I could see the flames of candles set in many-branched candlesticks which were lighting the King's return. The murmur of their voices reached us. Monsieur Gribouri looked at me, his black eyes burning.

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"Be tranquil, Monsieur," said I; "your secret is utterly safe with me."

"But—your answer?"

"It is the Count d'Aulone who answers where his family's honour is concerned," I said coolly.

We were already moving toward the returning throng; and presently mingled with them; and I do not believe anybody could recognize us in the darkness or that it was noticed we had been alone together.

I did not discover my father until we were entering the Palace court. When I saw him I thanked Monsieur Gribouri and dismissed him with perfect politeness.

My father parted from the gentleman with whom he had been walking and stood aside near an orange tree, scanning the passing crowd of courtiers as though looking for me,

CHAPTER XIV

WHEN my father caught sight of me he came to meet me, but I drew him aside among the orange trees of the terrace.

"Father," I said, "are we Huguenot?"

He seemed astonished. After a short silence he replied:

"We are like to be, I think; don't you, Michelle?"

"Yes. . . . Our Régiment d'Aulone is to march against the Huguenots; the King's spies know that we possess a Bible and prayer-book of the reformed religion; we are to submit, and reaffirm our faith. If we do this we prosper and the road to preferment lies open before us under favour of the King, of the Marquise de Maintenon, of Père La Chaise, of the Marquis de Louvois. . . . Otherwise we are lost."

"Where got you this, Michelle?"

"I may not name the source."

"A pledge?"

I nodded and plucked his laced cuff to call his attention to the Marquis de Chamilly followed by Monsieur Gribouri, who were coming toward us from the direction of the King's apartments. Somehow I knew that these gentlemen were coming for my father, and that the crisis was here!

Monsieur de Chamilly, seeing us, immediately approached us. He held a letter in his hand.

"Ah, Monsieur d'Aulone," he said, "I have excellent news for you who are first of all a soldier!"

My father smilingly took the letter, asked indulgence, broke the King's seal and read it, smiling all the while.

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I did not even glance at Gribouri or at Chamilly; I watched my father.

When he had read the letter he thanked the Marquis politely who immediately took his leave of us and hurried away with Gribouri—whom I had not noticed by the slightest quiver of an eyelash.

Slowly my father and I walked over to the wall where nobody could look over our shoulders.

He handed me the letter: I read it by the light of the great crystal lustre overhead:

Monsieur le Comte d'Aulone,

Monsieur,

The Marquis de Chamilly has asked the King for a regiment to operate in the vicinity of La Rochelle where new disturbances are reported among the Calvinists.

His Majesty has been gracious enough to designate the Régiment d'Aulone to carry out his wishes.

Your marching orders will be delivered to you within the week.

LOUVOIS.

I looked at my father. Well, the crisis had come, as Gribouri had warned me. It was here.

My father said, quite calmly: "It is not my habit to await attack. I go to meet it."

He looked at his watch. It was now past eleven. At twelve the King retired.

He said: "Michelle, if I am arrested, you will go at once to the Convent of the Recollettes which is that large structure, the park-walls of which adjoin the walls of our pavilion garden. From that sanctuary you will write what has happened to the Baroness d'Elven and ask her

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advice and protection until such time as my fate becomes certain. Do you comprehend?"

"Yes, Father."

"Then come with me."

I was frightened.

As we came into the great gallery we saw Louvois passing through the crowds; and my father directed his steps to encounter him.

Seeing us, he gave my father a sharp glance, then instantly was all courtesy and attentions.

Of him we learned that the King was working at his bureau in Madame de Maintenon's cabinet, and that Louvois was on his way thither.

He seemed astonished that my father should request an audience, although at that hour not only the King's ministers but officers of the army were often summoned for a word or admitted to present despatches.

We went with Louvois whose secretary carried his portfolios. I was becoming very badly scared. My father's handsome features remained placid.

Guards, halberdiers, gentlemen ushers we passed in every corridor, and came finally into an antechamber where Louvois bade us wait.

A single Blue Halberdier paced the threshold. Instantly I remembered what the Baroness d'Elven had told us. I saw my father give him a quick glance, and I knew that he also remembered.

In this antechamber there were three gilded doors; one through which we had entered, another to the right, another to the left.

Louvois continued on through the door on the right, his secretary following with the portfolios.

Scarcely had the minister disappeared than the Blue Halberdier turned sharply on his heel and said in a low

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voice to my father: "You are the Comte d'Aulone, are you not, sir?"

"I am," replied my father coolly.

"Madame the Baroness of Elven sends you this key. . . ." He thrust a key at my father who took it instantly and dropped it into his pocket.

"Sir, in case of trouble, leave the Palace by *that* door," whispered the halberdier pointing to the door on the left.

Then he tossed his tasselled halberd to his shoulder and began slowly to pace the threshold outside the ante-chamber.

Almost immediately the door on the right opened and Louvois came out followed by his secretary. He was hot, flushed and agitated, and—not distinguished for the delicacy of his manners—he wiped his sweating face with the lace of his sleeve.

"Monsieur," he said almost harshly, "you may see his Majesty if you desire to, but his Majesty is considerably disturbed concerning the troubles near La Rochelle, and I advise you not to."

However, at that moment one of Madame de Maintenon's gentlemen appeared at the same door and, asking our names, signified that we were to follow him through the corridor.

The next moment a door opened and we saw the King.

I was horribly startled for I had no idea that we were so near him.

We were in a good sized room. The King sat at a table, writing. His arm-chair was shoved back against the wall. There was one other chair near it.

Opposite, in a corner, upon a three-cornered, red damask sofa, sat Madame de Maintenon, sewing. Beyond her was an alcove with a bed in it.

We made our reverences. As I recovered, and rose,

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I saw that the King's eyes were fixed upon the letter containing the orders of Louvois, which my father held unfolded in his hand.

Now, bowing respectfully again to the King, he advanced and laid the letter upon the table.

"Monsieur," said the King quietly, "what does this signify? Do you not understand your orders?"

"Sire," said my father in his pleasant voice, "with all possible respect and submission to your Majesty, I refuse to charge my conscience with the execution of any such orders."

I was so terrified that my knees shook. Madame de Maintenon continued to sew.

But over the King's face had come a dreadful pallor. He looked at the broken seal of the letter; he looked at my father.

"Sire," said my father in his tranquil voice, "will your Majesty be pleased to send for your Captain of the Guard in order that I may surrender to him my sword?"

The King rose, white with fury—blinded by it!—for his hand fell upon a jewelled dog-whip which lay among his papers, and he clutched it and lifted it with a sort of sharp cry like a forest beast.

I heard the startled voice of Madame de Maintenon—"Sire! Sire! What are you doing!" And—oh, God!—I saw my father's raging visage, and his naked sword in his hand.

There fell a horrible silence. Then my father, looking the King in the eyes, suddenly bent one knee and snapped his sword-blade across it; and threw the fragments upon the King's table where they rolled among his papers.

Not a word was said. We went out.

As we entered the antechamber where the Blue Halberdier stood, one of Madame de Maintenon's gentlemen

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rushed past us—on his way to the guard-room, I suppose.

Near dead with fear, I twitched my father's sleeve and drew him toward the door on the left: "The key. This way. . . ."

"Yes," he said, "I remember."

The door opened upon a narrow stairway. As we arrived at the door below, two sentries crossed their muskets and called out: "Who goes there!"

"Friends," said my father carelessly.

I know not what they thought; but, seeing that my father had the key to the door, and went about opening it with all the coolness in the world, they let us pass out into the night.

Outside the blue and gold balustrades and beyond the gilded grille I caught sight of our carrosse; and we hurried to it and told our men to drive home at a gallop.

My father held me close in his arms. What he had done in Maintenon's cabinet meant death for him. We both knew it.

"Remember," he said, "you are to ask for sanctuary at the Recollette Nuns. Then write to our cousin of Elven."

"Yes. And you?"

"Get clear of French soil, somehow."

"Take Boufflon and try to reach the coast. . . ." I choked; my lips and throat were so dry with terror that I could scarcely articulate.

He nodded: the coach stopped; he handed me out. To our mounted *piqueur* he said: "Go across to the barracks and tell Sergeant Boufflon to saddle my two horses, Chiriqui and La Flamme, and bring them here instantly."

Then he dismissed the carrosse, and we entered our garden.

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Oh, Mary Mother! that was a frightful moment; and I clung to my father, listening for the gallop of the Black Musketeers along the Avenue de Paris; and near died of fright when Boufflon rode up with our own two horses.

"*Fearing God alone*," said my father, taking me into his arms.

"Surely. . . . Your swiftest refuge is some ship, is it not?"

"Yes."

"You have money?"

He reassured me and told me to take with me all the gold in his strong box; and gave me the key.

There was no moment to lose. He strained me to his breast, turned and sprang into his saddle.

As long as I could hear their horses' galloping flight I stood there at the gate. Then, when darkness had swallowed the last sound, I went into the house, ran to my father's apartment, emptied into a large, embroidered portfolio what gold there was, swept the remainder of my mother's jewels into it.

I had told Nanon she need not wait up for me. But Nicole was waiting. I loved and trusted her as I did not entirely trust Nanon.

When she saw me in the candle light she exclaimed at my paleness, but I put my hand over her mouth.

"Listen," I said, "the fact is that my father and I are ruined in this hour; and if they catch my father the King will have him executed!"

I wished to know at once how this girl was going to behave. She stared at me in horror, but she stood the shock.

"Nicole, do you love me?"

"Oh, M-mademoiselle—"

"Very well. I take refuge with the Recollettes. Pack

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one trunk with plain necessities, and have your drummer-boy Colin carry it there before dawn. . . .”

I pulled out of my heavy portfolio more gold than the girl ever could hope to see in all her life.

“For you and Colin when you marry,” I said. “Go back to Aulone in the carrosse. At least you will be at home.”

Tears were streaming down her cheeks.

I said: “Tell nobody where I have gone. I do not trust Nanon.”

“I have to tell you,” whimpered Nicole, “that Red Gendarmes came here after you and M’sieu le Comte had gone to the Palace. Nanon gave them your Bible and Book of Prayer.”

“Doubtless,” said I coldly; but I was in a rage that Maintenon had dared buy my own servant under my very nose.

All the while my ears were strained to catch the ominous noise of horsemen on the Paris road.

Not that I was anxious concerning my own safety. They could do no more than exile me if they caught me here. I knew I would be beggared except for what I could save and take with me now. I knew that we had lost everything within the hour—Aulone, Maniscamp-sur-Ombre, the regiment, all, every acre, every penny.

I said to Nicole: “This is the end of France for us. But nobody knows it yet except the King, his Maintenon, ourselves, and the Captain of the King’s Guard.

“When they fail to unearth us in the Palace they will come here to rummage. Therefore, pack one box; and you and I will carry it to the Recollettes’ gate, for I dare not wait for réveill   and Colin.”

We fell to with a will. Fortunately, as we had only just arrived in Versailles, my boxes were still packed.

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I hated to leave anything, being French and thrifty. But I was obliged to, for time pressed.

Finally we got our box packed and locked and bolted.

I am slim but strong; and Nicole is a healthy girl. We carried the box down to the garden, waited till the sentry had turned the corner into the mews, then we lugged our box out under the rows of trees and dragged it along the footway to the Recollettes' gate.

Here I seized the bell rope and rang; and the noise of the iron bell scared us both.

After a long while an old man came.

I said to him: "I am Mademoiselle de Maniscamp and I seek sanctuary of the Recollette Nuns who, for benefits received from the Counts of Aulone, are pledged to receive any woman of that family."

Poor old man! He was so aged he could scarcely speak at all; but he opened the gates; Nicole and I dragged the box to his gate-lodge door and dropped it. Then I began to cry; and I took Nicole into my arms and kissed her; and so left her and went on toward the convent beyond where a lantern glimmered among the chestnut trees.

CHAPTER XV

WHEN I awoke in my narrow bed, my drowsy eyes encountered a bare stone wall. Sleepy, puzzled, I turned my head on my pillow and saw at the foot of my bed a crucifix.

Suddenly the terrible recollection of what had happened overwhelmed me; I started up with a stifled cry, then sank back upon my hard pillow, shivering.

Through the dreadful shock of our disaster my brain had remained perfectly clear. It remained so now even while I realized all the horror of my situation. I remembered that the King had lifted a dog-whip against my father; and that, menaced by an insult unparalleled in the history of our race, my father had drawn his sword against his King.

Death was the penalty. Nothing could save him if he were taken. But, also, I knew that had that jewelled kennel-whip ever touched an Aulone there had been a dead King in Versailles. For never had any monarch who ever lived stood in such peril of his life as had the King of France at that instant.

For a while I lay there, and could not control the trembling of my limbs; but finally sat up in my night shift and again looked around the small room of stone where I had slept.

For I had slept; and that was something.

Now it is not among the faults of our race that, when a blow fells us, we lie prone in terror of another and make no effort to rise and face the worst.

Somewhere in France my father was galloping toward safety.

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I lay here with the Recollettes in sanctuary.

We both were in God's hands.

Yesterday, sun and Sun-King had beamed warmly upon us. Even the countenance of the silent Marquise with her strange, placid, moon-like beauty, had shone mildly upon us.

Yesterday I was courted, fêted, importuned, pursued; all the world was in flower for me; the great smiled on me; women were kind, men kinder. In that jewelled pageant my dazzled eyes had seen Paradise itself opening before me.

One single day of Heaven! Then, suddenly it had turned into a blazing hell.

It appeared that the nuns had allotted me three small rooms. There was scarcely any furniture in them.

A crock of water stood on the floor in the adjoining room. In this I bathed, after I had said my prayers.

The dreadful oppression that weighed upon me was loneliness, not despair. I missed my father.

Well, I looked about for my clothing and for my box, and discovered neither. But there hung, upon a peg, the habit of a Recollette novice. So I dressed me in it, and presently stood in gray with snowy wimple and tall, winged *coiffe à cornette* from which fell the vast white veil; and looked down at my plastron where, on my breast, three scarlet drops were embroidered to symbolize the blood of Christ.

Presently, upon my cell door, there came a discreet scratching; and first a large gray cat walked in, looking up at me with pleasant mien; then followed a little novice with chocolate and bread, new butter and a dish of honey.

She was a charming child in the first months of her

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novitiate, and she answered questions timidly, and seemed to be in great awe of me.

While I ate I heard, continually, the soft toned convent bells sounding for one office after another: heard distant singing from the chapel, but so faint that a blackbird's lusty piping outside my barred window drowned it.

When I had breakfasted I washed my face and hands again and went out into the corridor from which steps descended to the cloisters enclosing a grassy court full of sunshine.

Along these I wandered, seeing nobody for a while. But a little later the nuns came out of the chapel in leisurely procession, two by two, and I watched them pass among the pillars under the arches of the cloister.

When they had disappeared I went into the chapel and knelt down.

For a long time I remained there in prayer. I prayed for my father's deliverance. I prayed for courage. I wondered, at moments, whether my prayers would be heard in this chapel dedicated to a faith which, in my heart, I was abandoning for another. But it seemed to me that, after all, belief in God mattered most of all.

For His patience and compassion are infinite and eternal. But it was different with kings and men who, in His gentle name, had wrought our ruin in a single hour.

When I had said my heart-full, I rose from my knees and, seated in the jewelled glow of the great windows, remained in meditation.

Here, presently, the Mother Superior of the order—who had been Madame de Carrasin de la Roche Sainte Marie—discovered me.

She was young, beautiful, with nobility in every slightest movement. In her blue gaze I saw no slightest trace of cold austerity, nor yet of any worldly passion; but it

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seemed like meeting the clear, sweet wisdom of some young angel's eyes who had looked on God and found Him merciful.

We went out of the chapel together; and when we were closeted within her oratory I told her of our tragedy.

"Mother," I said, "I am not a professed Calvinist, yet am inclined that way. Have I then a right to demand sanctuary of you?"

"My child, you are an Aulone. Asylum is your right." But her answer pricked my pride, and I said with some hauteur that the Aulones were not money-lenders to force repayment; and that if my faith rendered me unwelcome I would go at once.

A sorrowful smile touched her tranquil eyes: "Child," she said, "we all shall become what God designs us to be. Because your heart is troubled and your faith falters, shall I take it upon myself to challenge God's purpose, or criticise His way with you?"

"My Mother," I murmured, "you are divinely human. . . . And many throughout France, in this hour, and while we are seated here, are dying because the King will not tolerate God's ways with them."

She shook her head very gently: "Set us Kings upon their thrones. To Cæsar render what is his."

"What is his? My honour? My conscience?" I asked hotly. "No; they belong to me; and my soul belongs to God—whatever He chooses to do with it."

She took my hand and laid it between hers "There is a storm within you," she said, "which must rage in grief and bitterness until such time your soul seeks refuge with its Maker—as your body hath sought it in this hour among us.

"Therefore, as God shall welcome your tormented soul, so we welcome you in your perplexity, and grief."

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I laid my face upon her hands and wept for a while. For I seemed to have lost God as well as my father. Everything was gone in a single moment—home, friends, happiness—all done to death by the senseless cruelty of a king and a silent, calm-faced woman.

I sat upright and stared at the Mother Superior through my tears.

"I am ashamed," I said. "Do not despise me; for truly I have all the courage in the world; and shall bear me hardily whatever comes."

She also was the daughter of a soldier. She smiled faintly; pressed my hands; rose and fetched a silver basin, and bathed my eyes.

I drew a long, steady breath: "It is over," I said. "You shall witness no more storms, my Mother."

I walked about the oratory to steady and recover myself. I thought of my father galloping for his life; and I said to myself that God's own armoured angels galloped on either side of him with drawn and flaming swords.

A strange tranquillity began to possess me. I seemed to be ready for whatever was to come.

As I was lying on my bed that afternoon, thinking, I thought I heard the sound of drums.

About eight o'clock that evening I descended to the refectory where supper was spread and took my place at the right hand of the Superior.

I spoke to her of hearing drums during the afternoon; and she told me very gently that the Regiment of Aulone had marched away from its barracks; and that a company of Red Gendarmes were now installed there.

The last tie broken! Even our regiment had gone. For a while I could scarce contrive to eat; but would not have it so, having boasted of courage. So I took what

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was offered of meat and drink, and swallowed it, too, determined that not even a Recollette nun should ever detect in me any weakness unworthy of an Aulone.

But you never can understand what a grief it was to me to realize that our regiment was lost to us forever; that a new colonel now was leading it, God knows whither; and that I, lying upon my narrow bed, had heard, unknowingly, the farewell rolling of its familiar drums.

CHAPTER XVI

I DID not know where to send a letter to my father. To write either to Aulone or to Maniscamp-sur-Ombre would have been dangerous as well as useless.

However, I wrote to my cousin, the Baroness d' Elven, at Auris-la-Vallée, saying merely where I was, that we were in great trouble, that I was now alone; and asking her to write to me if she had not yet departed into England with the embassy.

No word came from my father; none from my cousin. But I held my courage in both hands—and Thou knowest, God, how I prayed.

On the ninth day after my arrival at the Recollettes', after the Angelus, I went out of the chapel where, all the afternoon, I had been at my devotions, and came into the kitchen garden of the convent. Here, not knowing what else to do, I walked to and fro among the young fruit trees, the beets, carrots, peas, beans; the neatly kept border beds of reseda, vervaine, pansies, and clove-pinks. The evening air was still and full of fragrance; and, in the west, a lemon-tinted light lingered a long time after many stars were out.

While I still lingered in the deepening dusk, wondering whether these same yellow stars overhead might, at this instant, be looking down upon my father, I heard the Mother Superior calling to me in a low, urgent voice, "Michelle! Michelle! There is news for you! Where are you?"

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I ran across the grass to her, and she drew me close and whispered in my ear: "Monsieur le Comte d'Aulone is safe beyond all pursuit."

"M-madame," I stammered, "is it certain?"

"You may depend upon it, darling. God has heard you."

A hot, wild joy enveloped me—scorched me—as though I had suddenly been enveloped in heavenly flames. Every ardent drop of blood was afire; my heart blazed with triumph.

I laughed; I kissed her hands; in my excitement I dropped on both knees upon the grass at her feet and, holding tightly to her habit, strove to find words of thanks to God, to her, to all the world. I knew not how to express my rapture; I could have committed a thousand extravagances in my joy.

I begged her to tell me by what means she had obtained the news. She shook her head. Doubtless she dared not tell me. Every religious community in France has secret sources of information, where there is more intrigue than in the Palace itself. However, she knew no more than she had told me, I think, except that Musketeers, both Black and Gray, and Red Gendarmes, had been riding the country in every direction; and that my father finally had escaped them and gained the sea-coast, somewhere, and was now gone out of France.

Never, never had I been so wildly happy. All my courage and gaiety were my own again in that supreme knowledge that my father was safe from the King's vengeance.

"My Mother," I said, "if he has reached the sea, what route could he have taken thither?"

She told me that the route which passes to the west of our convent led to Calais. That was the road that my

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father and Boufflon took; I saw them spur their horses through the chestnut alley and gallop into it.

I thought to myself that, as soon as I had word from my father, I also would be following that road to the sea to join him wherever he was.

When the Mother Superior left me I began to walk about in the starlight because my stone-walled chamber seemed too small to contain my joyous person.

Spite of my coiffe, wimple, and habit of a Recollette novice, my active limbs and body were nothing impeded, and, in the starry dusk among the clove-pinks, I picked up the skirts of my habit and walked minuettes and tip-toe ballet steps, dancing a *pas seul* on the dewy grass—which wetted not my stockings of wool through the coarse footwear of the nuns.

It was, I admit, in questionable taste for me to dance about with abandon in these garments of austerity; but I meant no disrespect, and there was nobody to see me in the dusk o' the chestnut trees.

As I pirouetted and promenaded about, giving my joy and my legs full swing, I sang, under my breath, the gay measures to which I timed my steps; and so, on light and careless feet, came presently by the lodge of the old gate-keeper where the great lantern burned over the gateway.

Here I approached the locked grille and pressed my face to the bars in order to see the road which led to Calais.

As I did so I saw a calèche with two yellow wheels, a hood, and drawn by four horses, turn from the route to Paris into the Calais road. The rays from the gate lantern lighted it; and, as it passed, I thought I saw a shadowy form lean forward as though looking at me.

I was not exactly uneasy, but it was a warning to me to

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keep away from the light. Lingering a moment, and listening to the sound of the wheels and horses' hoofs, I noticed that both suddenly ceased as though the driver had pulled up short.

Still I was not uneasy, merely prudent; and I withdrew from the grille and was walking back toward the trees, when something made me glance behind me.

A man was looking through the grille at me. The next moment I heard the gate bell ringing.

I did not run; I stood and stared. Then, as the man moved, the lantern light illuminated his features. It was the face of Gribouri.

The shock stopped my breath and set the hot blood raging in my cheeks.

He said never a word to me, but pulled the bell rope again; and almost in the same instant the old gate-keeper came out of his lodge. He was eating morsels of black bread which he sliced from a small, flat loaf as he approached the gate.

I heard him say in his quavering voice: "What is it you wish, Monsieur?" And I heard Gribouri's low voice: "Open in the King's name!"

The old man stood gaping at him in face of such summons. I did not know what he meant to do, but there was no time for me to lose, and I ran to him and shook him by the arm so vigorously that his little black loaf and his knife fell on the grass.

"What are you hesitating for?" I cried. "Convents are not violated like that! Tell that gentleman to begone about his business!"

The old man gave me a helpless, frightened look. Gribouri said to him in a menacing voice: "By the King's orders and under his warrant! Open!"

"Pay no attention!" I said breathlessly. "The King's

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person alone has access; and that only to the chapel door—”

Gribouri seized the bell rope and pulled it so savagely that the night rang with the startling clashing of the iron bell: “In the King’s name!” he shouted.

The poor old man seemed terrified. He had the great iron key in his hand, and had already taken a trembling step toward the grille when I snatched the key.

“I warn you, Mademoiselle, to open that gate,” said Gribouri, for the first time addressing me.

“What do you wish?”

“I wish you to listen to what I have to say to you.”

“Do you come to arrest me?” I demanded.

“That depends upon you!”

“What will you do if I refuse you admittance?”

“Ring this bell till the whole Convent is aroused!”

“You have no warrant,” said I. “It is the Musketeers who serve such warrants. I am not afraid of a *lettre-de-cachet*. . . .”

“My God!” he said passionately, “I threaten you with neither if you admit me. . . .”

“I have nothing kind to say to you, Monsieur.”

“I tell you I am risking all! In the name of God show me some compassion, Michelle!”

The familiarity exasperated me. I said very deliberately:

“I shall not listen to you, Monsieur. Nor to Monsieur de Chamilly, nor to the Marquise de Maintenon, nor even to the King himself. For I should be unable to understand what you were saying. Because, in our vocabulary, we have no words to express either cruelty or treachery.”

I saw his features darken with wrath and passion.

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"Well, then," he cried, "nevertheless you shall listen to me if I have to wake all Versailles!"

As he seized the bell rope, I caught up the bread-knife and slashed the rope where it passed over the pulley inside.

Then I took the poor old man by the arm and made him go into his lodge, saying that I had the key and would not open, and there was no more to do that night.

Coming out I looked at the grille, and saw that Gribouri had gone.

I did not know what to do. I supposed that even the King of France dared not violate sanctuary.

Yet, all his life this King had contrived to do things which no other monarch ever had ventured to attempt. Somehow, whatever he willed he found some way to accomplish.

I began to be very uneasy, and thought I had better tell our Mother Superior what had happened, and learn at once whether our altar-steps really would afford me the sanctuary that I thought was granted even to the vilest criminal in France.

So I hastened to cross to the path which follows the west convent wall under the chestnuts; and was already among the trees when a sound made me look up.

Gribouri stood before me at the foot of a light ladder which slanted against the wall behind him.

I was more enraged than frightened.

"Go back over the wall and pull your ladder after you," I said contemptuously; and would have passed on, but he caught my hands and I could not free them.

"Once more," he said in a voice which trembled with passion, "I risk fortune, future, life because I love you. . . ."

He was crushing my fingers and I begged him to release me.

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Then, before I could step back, he was on his knees, and had hold of my skirt, and was begging for compassion—a little kindness.

"I tell you," said I, "there is no compassion in me for you who have aided to bring my father and me to such a pass as this!"

"My God, Michelle!" he pleaded, "did I not risk my all to warn you?"

"You offered me the base advice to lie about my religion to save my skin!"

"What do I care whether you be Huguenot or Turk!" he burst out. "Whatever you are I love you! Do you know what they mean to do to you at Versailles? Because you were present when your father bared his sword against the King? They will send you to the Bastille and have you put to the question!"

When I could control the terror in my voice I said to him: "I think you lie, Monsieur."

"I do not lie. That is what will happen. You are to be forced to tell where your father is hiding."

"I do not know."

"Sometimes one recollects *when the boot pinches*."

The thought made me feel slightly faint. I think it was the underlying anger that heated, sustained, and heartened me.

"How could this be," said I, "when even a King dare not violate my right of sanctuary!"

He said: "Are these trees, this grass, sanctified?"

"Oh. . . . Would you bar my way to the altar?"

"I had rather lead you thither, Michelle."

"And—if I will not?" . . . But he caught me around the knees as a suppliant in agony clasps the cross: "I have a calèche and four horses ready on the other side of the wall," he said. "We can gain Calais and cross into Eng-

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land with the embassy of young François de Frontenac which is to sail tomorrow, wind and tide permitting."

I strove to steady my thoughts.

"You think we can cross in the Vicomte de Frontenac's ship?"

"Why not? Who is there to stop us? I have credentials which take me anywhere—on the King's service...." He laughed in his excitement at the irony of it all. "In England," he cried, "you may worship God or Mahomet—as you choose—and I will worship as you do! In pity's name be kind to me. . . ."

"How did you learn of my retreat among the Recollettes?"

"Your maid, Nanon. She has long been in pay of the Marquise de Maintenon. . . . But all that is ended, if you will. With you I can carve my way to fortune—"

A slight shudder passed over me. Yet I never had trusted Nanon.

"Where is your calèche?" I asked.

"There! Beyond the wall! Oh, Michelle. . . ."

"Take your arms from me!" I said. "Unless I marry you, Monsieur, never again presume to touch me."

He sprang to his feet, flushed, exultant, his graceful figure trembling.

Then he called solemnly upon God to hear him that, until I was his wife, never again would he lay upon my person the weight of his little finger.

I thanked him quietly, and asked if he had come here alone or with servants; and he said that, like the King, he drove his calèche and four horses alone, and had brought no servants because he trusted no one with the knowledge of my secret refuge here.

"And what," I enquired calmly, "was your purpose with me had I refused you, Monsieur?"

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"Force," he admitted in a shamed voice.

"Oh. Do you think you could have carried me up that ladder and over the wall against my will?"

He laughed excitedly: "Why argue that, Michelle—"

"I wish to know what you meant to do if you failed to carry me off bodily."

At that the smouldering passion in him flared: "No other man than I ever shall have you!" he said violently.

"Oh. So it was to be either you or the Bastille?" I asked, laughing.

He came close to me but did not touch me; and I saw the passion working in his face:

"No," he said, "not the Bastille. Because I would have killed us both. Here—under the trees! Now do you understand what love means to me, Michelle?"

"Mary Mother!" said I in a shocked voice, "I had rather not understand you, Monsieur." But I smiled when I said it.

At that his features cleared and his ardent eyes fixed themselves on mine.

"If we are to gain Calais," he said eagerly, "we have not one more moment to waste. The Embassy sails at four in the afternoon."

"Am I to elope with you in such clothing, Monsieur?" I asked incredulously.

His burning gaze suddenly became a glare for an instant; and I knew he feared treachery, and would not suffer me to enter the convent lest I fly to the chapel altar.

"Very well," said I gaily, "here is the gate key, Monsieur. Go out and fetch your calèche to me here, for I hope you are not expecting me to climb that ladder."

He looked at me intently, then waved away the key and

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shook his head. It was evident he did not intend to give me any opportunity to gain the chapel.

"Very well," said I impatiently, "if I am to climb that accursed wall, then at least you shall turn your back until I bid you follow me."

Which seemed to content him, and he laughed and, turning his back to me, walked a few paces away across the grass.

He had not yet paused before I was up the ladder, astride the wall, had pulled up the light ladder and was already lowering it on the other side.

How he suspected what I was about I do not know; I saw him suddenly whirl on his heels; I heard him cry out; saw him reach the wall at a bound; leap at the top. It was far too high. Also I had the gate key. He was trapped.

I did not taunt him. But all my contempt and horror of this man, of Maintenon, of the King, was concentrated in the last swift look I cast at him. As I ran down the ladder I could hear his desperate body's impact against the wall where he was leaping in a frenzy to gain a foothold, and was falling always back upon the sod.

With both hands I pulled the ladder from the wall and let it fall among the weeds and thorns of the ditch. Then I leaped over the ditch and ran toward the calèche which I saw standing under the chestnut trees, to one of which the two leading horses were fastened by halters.

Many a happy morning I had driven four horses through the leafy Aulone rides in my father's hunting calèche.

I hurried to the leaders; cast off their halters, ran to the calèche, sprang in, and gathered up and sorted the reins by instinct while the restless horses already were starting.

There was not a sound from the other side of the wall

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where Gribouri must have heard the noise of wheels. What would be the use in his shouting? The ladder was gone. I had the only key to the gate.

Let him run to the nuns. They could not help him if they would. They also must remain prisoners until some passer-by were hailed from the grille and bidden to fetch a locksmith.

No; he was trapped till morning.

As for me, I picked up the whip and swished it in the air. It was well that I did not touch my horses with it, for, at the mere sound, they bounded away like the wind, and I had my hands and eyes and mind well occupied with these animals so utterly strange to me, and who already evinced every inclination to run away.

CHAPTER XVII /

FOR one thing I was very thankful. I am still of a slender figure; I was really thin, then. So while I was at the convent, knowing I was to travel, I made for myself a deep belt of fine, soft leather which went all around my body above the hips and fell nearly to my knees. And in this I carried all my gold and every jewel I possessed.

Now it was my desperate purpose to gain the sea at Calais, and, from thence, pass over into England.

If the Vicomte François de Frontenac's mission to King James had not yet sailed, then my cousin the Baroness d'Elven would receive and shelter me, and convey me with her into England.

Not that I entirely believed what Gribouri had said about the Marquise having me arrested and conveyed to the Bastille.

I believed he lied when he spoke of their putting me to the question, and the tortures of the boot.

Nevertheless it frightened me very much. God knows what is done in the Bastille—though some say the King treats his guests very well. And few women are sent there. Still, there are tales. . . .

Meanwhile, while thinking of these things, I was driving my four horses and calèche through the night over the direct route to Calais.

I will say this for Monsieur Gribouri; his horses were gallant animals, and they ran like wild creatures. Sometimes I lost control for a while and had to let them run.

But there was not a soul abroad on the Calais road at that hour; no farmers' wains as yet rolling slowly toward

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Versailles or Paris with their loads of early vegetables; happily no late pleasure seekers in calèche or carrosse or a-horse; no patrols whatever.

The hamlets and villages through which we fled were without lights and silent, and our wheels and hoofs awoke a thousand echoes against wall and façade upon the wide, main road.

Sometimes, as we passed taverns, there were lights; and armed men ran out to observe our flight and shout after us—but what they shouted I never knew.

My hands and arms were a little tired, but not very. The rush of fresh air in my face made me drowsy at times, and, indeed, I should, naturally, have been asleep.

At times I drew in my horses to breathe and walk them, for they were all of a lather, snorting, and flanks heaving like bellows.

I did not know how far they could carry me on my way. I did not know what hour it was or how far I had travelled.

For the last hour or so I had observed that my horses could not carry me very much farther at any respectable speed.

So when I came to a large, dark structure, and discovered it to be a tavern, I drove into the mews behind it and made such a noise with calling and knocking upon the windows that finally a man came to the door in night-cap and shift and held a candle high to gaze at me.

“My God, Sister,” he faltered, “was it you who contrived to make such a noise?”

I told him I was obliged to reach Calais upon a matter of life or death—which was a little less than a lie, yet I knew not but it might be true.

“Holy Mother,” he said, “never before have I seen a Recollette driving four horses—nor any nun doing the

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like. And I think you are running away from your convent, for you are very pretty."

"Well," said I, smiling at him, "would a gallant man stay me?"

He laughed; then he grumbled and swore; but he let me have the relay I asked for when I gave him three gold pieces, and he bawled for an ostler to fetch them out.

I was detained twenty minutes; not more. I learned how far I had come; where I was; how far I had to travel; and where I might ask for a fresh relay.

"You are a gay little nun!" he called after me as I drove out of the mews, "and as long as you are but a novice you have a right to alter both your mind and your habit!"

I changed horses twice more and had no difficulty. Gold does anything in France.

Dawn comes early in June. Long before I arrived in sight of the walls of Calais, drovers, farmers, and a few merchants were abroad; and they all stared to see a nun in a hooded calèche driving four horses at a gallop. I realized this would not do at all, and that a patrol of gendarmerie might stop me at any moment, though, so far, I had encountered none.

So the very next farmer I saw in his yard I called to and offered him two gold pieces to drive me into Calais.

He was greedy, but cautious. He desired to know what had become of the driver. Well, as owner and driver was Monsieur Gribouri, I thought it no harm to reply that he had had an accident and was unable to continue the drive.

Thus I handed over the reins to this big, bull-necked man and, veiling my face, lay back and almost instantly fell asleep.

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What awoke me was my farmer-driver shaking my arm; and I sat up quickly and saw the guard had stopped us at the gates of Calais.

My only credential was my religious garb. A very young officer came to the calèche and peered in at me under the hood.

"Where are you going, Sister?" he asked respectfully.

I knew not what to say except the truth, which was that I was to sail with Monsieur le Vicomte de Frontenac's mission to England.

"Well," he said, "they have gone aboard their ship. Wind and tide are sufficiently favourable at this hour, and they do not mean to wait until evening. Therefore, you should hasten, Sister. . . ."

He signalled the driver to proceed, and pointed out the way to the wharf.

The narrow street was flooded with sunshine. It swarmed with people, too; but I whispered to my driver about another gold piece, and he began to crack his whip and bawl for right of way:

"Business of Monsieur de Frontenac! Make room, if you please, for the Recollette nuns!"

These were only peasants—market folk and fishermen—and all gave way and removed their hats respectfully.

Suddenly I smelled the sea. Never before had I sniffed that fragrance.

Then I saw the wharf, and the great ship alongside; and men in Monsieur de Frontenac's gray and silver livery running hither and thither, and sailors standing with great ropes in their hands. I never before had seen a ship, but something told me that she was about to sail.

I threw four gold pieces into my driver's lap, climbed

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from the calèche, ran to the railed incline and hurried aboard the ship.

Nobody stopped me, but the farmer shouted after me: "Sister, Sister! What am I to do with these horses?"

I paid no attention, but, seeing an officer on the deck who was looking at me very intently, I asked him where I might find Madame the Baroness d'Elven.

With every courtesy and all the manners in the world he conducted me, hat in hand, to a kind of stairs; down it, with every delicacy, attention, and caution, to another deck where I saw some ladies and gentlemen in gay conversation.

Hat in hand he indicated a door, bowed very low, and took himself off.

Upon this door I scratched. One of my cousin's maids opened it.

"M-mademoiselle!" she stammered, recognizing me.

Over her shoulder I saw my cousin looking at me without a trace of expression on her lovely features.

Then her mouth made a scarlet letter O, and she stretched out both hands to me.

I was still huddled at her feet, my head hidden in her lap, when I felt the first slight rocking motion of a real ship moving through water.

CHAPTER XVIII

OF our short voyage I saw nothing, because for nearly twenty-four hours I lay asleep in my cousin's little cabin. Never had I experienced such bodily exhaustion. Only excitement had sustained me during that headlong drive to Calais. But the horses had nearly pulled my arms from their sockets; my hands and fingers were nearly helpless. I was not hungry; I swallowed a mouthful of Burgundy mixed with water and crept onto a sofa. All I remember before I fell asleep is that my cousin was kneeling beside me drawing off my clumsy convent stockings.

When I awoke, our ship, the *Province-Rose*, galley, was gliding up the River Thames.

There was no wind, no motion, merely the ripple of water. I heard the steady, swinging rhythm of oars; the sound of voices and click of heels on the deck overhead.

A slight breeze came through the square port-hole above my head. I flung the bed covering from me, got to my knees, my feet, and peeped out of the open port.

The shore seemed very near. Trees and herbage were intensely green. I supposed that this must be England, but could scarcely realize we had left France.

One of the Baroness d'Elven's maids, an English girl, hearing me stirring, came presently with some chocolate, strawberries, and buttered bread. I was nearly starved.

The only thing they had for me to wash in was a great Chinese bowl. In this I stood while the red-cheeked

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maid bathed me. I asked her to talk to me in English, and I was delighted to find that I had not forgotten how to understand and speak it.

She told me that nobody on the ship had been seasick; that now we were in the Thames and approaching London; and that already the docks and shipping were visible from the deck above us.

She brought to me the attire in which I was to be clothed. I never had seen such beautiful stockings and chemise; and never ceased admiring them while she dressed my hair.

Neither my cousin nor I painted; I examined with idle curiosity the flasks of lily-balm, rouge-pots, powders, pastes, scents—a wonderful battery of beauty for the jaded, in its case of polished wood inlaid with gold.

While the maid was buckling my garters, my cousin came in, pressed her hands upon my shoulders, not permitting me to rise, and kissed my cheeks.

"Well," said she, "the sun is shining in the sky. . . . *Dans ton cœur, fait-il beau temps, ma mie?*"

"Not a cloud," said I, happily, gathering her hands to my lips and kissing every finger.

When her maid had gone: "It was Captain d'Amadou' who so politely conducted the little Recollette abo'd his ship," she said. "I was ve'y f'ank with him; I said to him, 'Monsieu' d'Amadou', my cousin, Mademoiselle de l'Omb'e, has fled the convent because of unwelcome assiduities of a ve'y violent gentleman.'"

"Oh, Mary Holy," said I, "you spoke only truth, my cousin!" We seated ourselves on the small sofa and I told her everything.

Sometimes she made scarlet O's with her mouth, sometimes flickered her lovely eyes at me. And now that the tragedy of my one day at Versailles was over; and my

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father was safe, somewhere; and I already in England, my natural gaiety began to reassert itself.

"Fancy," said I, "that great fool Gribouri threatening me with *the question!* And the *boot!*!"

"Oh, *ma douce amie!*" She drew me into her arms and petted me.

I swiftly kissed the rosebud God gave her for a mouth and sat up in a determined manner:

"*Corbleu*, Madame!" said I gaily, "the whirlwind has passed and left in ruins all that once was ours. Let the Marquise and the King pick our estates to pieces! But *we* are safe and sound—my father and I! In God's time we shall rejoin each other. *Somewhere!* Well, then, neither he nor I were made to snivel over spilled milk and a cracked bowl. No."

I sprang to my feet and began to promenade the floor of the little cabin.

"*You* would not let me starve," I said, executing a light pirouette, "—would you, *ma toute belle?*"

"Oh, *ma douce!*—"

"Very well, then, I am your cousin, Mademoiselle Michelle de l'Ombre. I have no fortune, therefore I serve you as lady-in-waiting! *Demoiselle d'atour!* Who can question this? It is the truth."

She made an O at me, but admitted it was the easiest way to explain my presence.

"But this young F'ontenac," she said with a slight shrug, "—his eyes are not as cold as his mother's! Remember that."

"Oh, is he gallant?" I asked, smiling.

"Always running after petticoats and pretty ankles. His fixed idea. And, besides that, bad. Well, yes, then; a duellist, a bully, noisy, *mal-élevé*, in brief, ev'rything a gentleman is not!"

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"I waste no time on him," said I.

She said in a perplexed tone that this young François de Frontenac's father was a hot-head and a brawler, and that he begot as many illegitimate children as he could. But that old Count Frontenac was also a brave and fiery soldier; a great Captain; and the greatest Royal Governor that ever ruled Canada.

"And why," she added, "the only son of 'The Divine Countess' and of the Wa' God of the New Wo'ld should be such a qua'elsome, wenching, tippling whelp, nobody eve' can unde'stand."

"Why," said I, "does our King send him to White-hall?"

She made an O with her mouth:

"King James is no saint," said she. "These two will put theh heads into the same pot of wine and chase the same petticoat, a'm in a'm. That is why.

"Also, while the old Count F'ontenac is stealing all Ame'ca f'om the English, we amuse King James with the antics of the young Vicomte de F'ontenac. You see?"

I laughed and turned a light pirouette or two upon the points of my toes. I had had but a taste of gaiety and courts and gallants. One single day and evening at Versailles before all fell into ruins around me. Why should I not desire another hour or two of brightness, of flattery, of admiration? A moment more of brilliancy before the sunset?

If they wished to keep King James amused while they were stealing his American colonies from him, why should not I amuse myself while the Sun-King and Madame de Maintenon were stealing and rifling our homes and acres at Maniscamp and Aulone?

"Maître Corbeau," said I, "is now picking the bones

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of Aulone, no doubt. Why may I not pick crumbs of comfort at Whitehall?"

Suddenly a cannon-shot from our deck made the floor jump up under me. Bang! Bang! Bang!

Our *Province-Rose* was saluting the English flag.

I ran and looked out of the port, and saw a vast, gray city bordered by gray waters alive with sails.

My cousin rose from the sofa and gave me her hand, saying that we should go on deck.

I saw, gathered there, some gentlemen and ladies whom I did not know. They were properly polite to the cousin of the Baroness d'Elven.

Presently François de Frontenac came swaggering to make his manners, and accomplished them with little grace but with vast assurance. And he kept staring at me and licking his loose mouth which sagged like a very yokel's; and his bold, puffy eyes ever followed me, impudently familiar.

"Mary Mother," thought I, "this young man is not at all to my taste, and if the King of England resembles him I am undone."

CHAPTER XIX

NOW this embassy of François de Frontenac was not to be known as a mission, because of jealousies certain to arise between him and our Ambassador to the Court at Whitehall.

It was entirely a private matter; a delicate reassurance of good will and personal support from the King of France to the King of England. But designed to be known publicly. So that if, in Holland, the Prince of Orange were truly planning to invade England and drive out King James, with the vast fleet he was said to be gathering, all still loyal to England's King might know that the superb fleets of France were ready to support the Stuart upon his throne.

That, principally, was what the visit of our gay company meant; although the choice of the great Count Frontenac's only son was intended to ease the minds of those who cried out against the warlike attitude of the Governor of Canada toward New York and Boston.

In London we were housed in a fine mansion near the Park of St. James; and I, as *Demoiselle d'atour* to the Baroness d'Elven, occupied a chamber adjoining her apartments.

All this bustle and gaiety—the sight of a strange country, strange faces, unfamiliar dress and uniforms, excited me.

Always I was running to the windows to gaze at passers-by, at the soldiery, at great coaches in the Park, at officers riding, at fashionable folk afoot or in chairs.

Within our apartments our servants were hurrying to arrange our wardrobes.

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My cousin was most generous with me, and I now found myself in possession of clothing far more splendid than any I ever had expected to possess.

I showed her all my gold and jewels sewed into the garment I had fashioned at the convent, and gave them to her for safe-keeping, and to defray my expenses, for I would not accept from her any money while mine lasted. But about the gowns, stockings, chemises, and shoes she gave me we had a pretty quarrel; she would not permit me to indemnify her; and, in her calm vexation, kept silencing my protestations with kisses until I surrendered.

Well, first of all we paid our court to King James at his palace of Whitehall, which seemed to me, who had beheld Versailles, rather a mean abode for a great monarch.

We all arrived together; and there was a respectable assembly curious to see us, but nothing to compare with those vast ceremonies at Versailles.

Now, being pledged to tell you only truth, I am to acquaint you that the King of England has no dignity, and seemed to me a strange, plain, anxious-eyed man with perplexed features when in repose, and ever eager for some diversion to drive away worry and make him laugh.

But the Queen was different—tall, slender, almost beautiful in a certain manner, and a lovely aristocrat to her finger-tips. Yet she, too, bore traces of long-brooded griefs—God knows she had reasons!—yet was still deeply in love with this very common man, James the Second, King of England.

Had I never beheld the *Roi Soleil* and his court I might have thought Whitehall brilliant. Now it seemed tarnished.

Around the Queen were some pretty women; a few even

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beautiful; and all handsomely dressed and of noble bearing.

The King's gentlemen—the nobility from highest to least of consequence—were, I think, the handsomest men ever I had laid eyes on.

They seemed, however, to display little animation; little of elegance, gallantry, or of that careless, graceful wit to which, in France, we are accustomed.

I know the times were sorely troubled, and that there was sufficient mischief hatching in Holland to sober any in England.

Yet, it struck me that nearly all these Englishmen were of a sadder, more serious cast of mind than are we; and that such folk as the King, and a few of his familiars, were exceptions.

The King, as I say, displayed little ceremony, and it was very plain that he was mightily taken with François de Frontenac, seeming to detect at a glance in this young man a future boon-companion to drive anxieties from his troubled mind.

With my cousin, too, the King seemed greatly struck; and was, in his own manner, full of gallantries and courtly attentions, holding her in conversation for some time.

As for me, very gladly would I have been courted by almost any of these handsome English gentlemen; and I admit I gave them sufficient encouragement. But they did not appear to be very enterprising, and I was annoyed because young Frontenac had the impudence to circle around me as though already I were something that belonged in his soiled nest, and he were jealous of his conquest.

Well, our reception at court did not last very long, and we got into our chairs and coaches and returned to our

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mansion, only again to sally forth to pay our respects to the Duchess of Portsmouth—this at particular command of our King.

Louise Renée de Keroüalle, Duchess of Portsmouth, was well over thirty, and looked twenty.

She was the most beautiful Breton I ever beheld; and God knows why the English cried out so bitterly, because, if she had had what my cousin called “amou’s,” they were fewer, and far decenter, than those of many a great lady in England, and of more great ladies in France.

She was a pretty, modest mannered thing, with a child-like candour of address and graceful manners. I know that my cousin the Baroness d’Elven thought as I did, that Louise de Keroüalle was a victim, and never inclined for the career into which two selfish Kings had forced her. Yet she was marvellously clever; and I wonder how many little convent girls at sixteen might not have done what she did rather than take the veil for which she had no vocation.

That night we supped with the Duchess, and there was dancing and basset afterward, with much gaiety and pleasure. And nothing mean or untoward except that François de Frontenac became drunk and annoyed me—which anybody could plainly perceive was of his own doing and not encouraged by me.

To dance with this man was to suffer; to endure his assiduities an affliction. God knows I was in trouble enough without offending him, and remained at considerable pains not to, but the more I saw of him the less I found in his leering insolence to pardon.

He was afraid of my cousin, though I sometimes saw him licking his loose lips and admiring her; but he was not afraid of me, and wasted little ceremony and circumspection in his preliminaries, but prepared for a brief

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siege and swift assault of a heart which already began to detest him.

Well, we danced, and played at basset—a most villainous game!—until it was broad day; and I had not realized how sleepy I had become until, in our own lodgings once more, I attempted to perform my offices for my cousin. So her maids did for us both what I should have done for her, and we both tumbled upon one bed, too drunk with slumber to know what we were about.

It was eleven o'clock before we awoke; and both could have slept longer; but had been bidden to dine on the Queen's side among her maids of honour; and so reluctantly to our sleepy toilets to get us to Whitehall by one o'clock, and there observe the Queen dine, and then, with the maids of honour, dine ourselves.

That was a dreary function, to observe their Majesties at dinner and stand among the throngs of courtiers in tiresome imitation of the ceremony used at Versailles—where, however, our King always dines by himself.

Afterward, in the Queen's withdrawing room, my cousin and I saw many great ladies, including Arabella Churchill who had been maid of honour to the Duchess of York in the late King's reign. One Duchess was quite as vulgar and dirty as our own Duchesse d'Harcourt. But there were fine ladies of great dignity there, and, while ceremonious and stiff, seemed desirous of being kind to my cousin and to me.

After dinner we went to the King's Playhouse and saw *The Island Princess* which had not been acted for many years.

It was the first play I ever had seen and it enchanted me; and there was a wonderful scene of a town on fire.

But it was strange how much vulgarity was spoken and tolerated. And I saw an actress from the Duke's House

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come into an upper box, and sprawl there in company of a she-comrade, and jest and laugh with all the impudence in the world.

The play over, we returned by coach to Whitehall where, on the King's side, was to be a leave-taking and last instructions to the admirals and captains of Sir Roger Strickland's fleet.

Now, concerning this ceremony, I have particularly to tell you, because my attendance there utterly altered the entire course of my life and career.

You may imagine I never dreamed, as I set foot upon the threshold of that brilliant salon, that Fate led me by the hand.

Well, then, so that you may clearly understand the significance of the occasion, permit me to repeat in substance what Louise de Keroüalle told me in my ear where we stood together in the recess of a vast window.

To escape the endless annoyance of that young fool Frontenac I had sought the Duchess of Portsmouth's protection—my cousin being held in conversation by the King—poor wretch!

So this is what her Grace of Portsmouth whispered to me: that, spite of all she could do, revolt was surely brewing in England, and a vast number of people had sickened of the King, and desired to welcome the Orange Prince as their new sovereign.

That our King had urged King James to get ready a fleet to oppose any fleet which Holland might send against him.

That, after a year of dawdling, King James had gathered a fleet of twenty-five ships of the line, fifteen frigates, eighteen fire ships, and a few yachts.

That the King had, at first, given this fleet to Rear

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Admiral Sir Roger Strickland, to the anger of many who disliked him.

That Sir Roger, instead of watching Holland, had been idling twixt the Nore and the Gunfleet; that now, on this day, Admiral the Earl of Dartmouth had been given supreme command; and, in the presence of the King, and of the sea-lords, was to receive his fleet captains, and give them last instructions so that his order of battle should be interpreted by his own lips and every detail made plain to every admiral and captain.

This, then, was the occasion for the present gathering. But the informality of it astonished me. For the King, who, when Duke of York, had been considered a good admiral, was plainly bored by the proceedings.

I saw him sauntering about, laughing with Frontenac, seeking gaiety and merriment among young men and pretty women, and, when not finding it, striving to force it.

Lady Portsmouth, watching over her fan's edge, whispered that François de Frontenac was a buffoon like young Killigrew, and of little value to her in holding King James to a manly course against Holland.

While we stood there in the embrasure of the high window, the Countess of Sunderland, passing, spoke politely to Lady Portsmouth; but I noticed the swift glance of intelligent suspicion that our Duchess cast after her when she continued.

Now I saw Admiral the Earl of Dartmouth come into the room, followed by Admiral Sir Roger Strickland.

The King, who had been restlessly roaming about from one lady to another with Frontenac at his heels, received Lord Dartmouth civilly enough except that he almost yawned in his face.

His Majesty now seated himself, and we all gathered

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around him as Lord Dartmouth took his place upon the King's right to receive the admirals and captains of the fleet which was to sail the next morning. Near to my Lord Dartmouth stood the officers of the Navy, among them Mr. Pepys who now, in fact, was the real power in naval affairs—and who kept looking at my pretty cousin and at me with all the lively and naïve curiosity in the world. He bowed low to the Duchess.

“A very stubborn, honest man,” whispered Lady Portsmouth, “and his wife French, and Sunderland can do nothing with him to gain him who is loyal to his King, and sets England's advantage first before private gain or any promise of preferment.”

I smiled faintly upon this honest Mr. Pepys, who reddened to his ears and gave me a most profound and courtly bow and another for my cousin of Elven.

Well, I saw some officers of the fleet, admirals and captains, come in and kiss the King's hand, and gather around my Lord Dartmouth.

To one of these, Vice Admiral Sir John Berry, Lord Dartmouth said something which I did not understand; but I saw everybody turn to look at Sir Roger Strickland who had turned mortal pale and stood rigid and silent, biting his lower lip.

Then Sir John bowed very low to the King, who was stifling another yawn, and to Lord Dartmouth; and, speaking in a pleasant, level voice, requested the Admiral to make clear once more wherein the new order of battle might differ from the order given by his Majesty when Duke of York.

Lord Dartmouth said in a somewhat loud voice: “You are to take notice of these principal instructions, that, upon discovery of the enemy I shall strike my ensign for a signal to you; and you shall stand in toward the enemy

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for observation, as near as prudent. Then you are to speak together to conclude on your report, and repair to your respective squadrons. Is that clear, gentlemen?"

They all bowed, and my Lord Admiral continued: "At sight of the enemy the Vice Admiral, with his squadron, and the Rear Admiral, with his squadron, are to make all sail to come up and form order of battle which I shall give; and my signal shall be the union flag on the mizzen peak of my ship.

"Which, as soon as observed, the Vice and Rear Admirals of the Red Squadron, and Admirals, Vice and Rear, of the other squadrons, are to answer by the same signal.

"If I desire any vessel to make sail or endeavour, by tacking, to gain the wind of the enemy, I shall put a red flag upon the spritsail, topmast shrouds, forestay, fore topmast-stay; and he who first discovers this signal shall make sail and hoist and lower his jack and ensign in signal to the rest of the fleet to follow."

He turned and looked enquiringly at the King who nodded listlessly. He then said to the captains:

"When I hoist my union flag at the mizzen peak I would have every commander in the fleet place himself in order of sailing and battle as prescribed, observing his starboard and larboard ship and leader, either sailing before or by the wind, and so continue as long as my signal flies.

"And now, gentlemen, if there be any other question, I am here to answer it. If not, you have your orders." Sir William Jennings asked some question which I could not catch. The Admiral replied, "Certainly." Then the King, yawning, got up out of his great chair and said something to young Frontenac, whereupon they both

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burst out laughing, and I saw some of the maids of honour laughing, too.

The King, leaning upon Frontenac's arm, walked away toward the matted gallery scarcely noticing his Admirals and Captains. These, in a group, lingering still to listen to their Admiral, took their leave one by one with every respect and ceremony.

The court was following the King; Lady Portsmouth went away with Lady Sunderland; Lord Dartmouth with Sir Roger Strickland walked out in grave conversation; nearly everybody had already gone when my cousin came to the window where I still lingered, waiting for a decent opportunity to adjust my garter which had slipped its clasp.

As I ventured to lift my skirt to remedy the mishap I heard the King's empty laughter as though he were returning; but managed to accomplish my business just as he re-entered the great salon with Frontenac.

Both were merry; and, seeing us, came toward us with mischief in their careless bearing.

Now there still remained in the room several of the fleet Captains, to whom I had turned my back when adjusting my fallen stocking.

As the King, now, in gay humour, passed these, he stopped in his capricious way, and spoke to them with free familiarity, calling each by name, and telling them to give the Dutch a sound beating if ever they presumed to affront the English flag.

One after another these Captains kissed his Majesty's graciously extended hand, and took respectful leave.

I noticed that the last Captain to approach him was a very young man—a mere stripling—and called my cousin's attention to his extreme youth; and she whispered to me that this young man was Sir Henry Quarles, son of

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the late Sir John Quarles who had been killed aboard his ship in the war of '83.

"Mary Mother," said I to Frontenac who now joined us, "do they make captains of children in England?"

He said with a sneer: "He is twenty-two and a fierce fighter—or so Mr. Pepys informs me. Doubtless he sucks his nursing bottle while he walks the quarter-deck."

I heard the King rallying this young man and jesting with him concerning his extreme youth:

"Sir Henry," said he, "I am astonished that they have not yet made of you an Admiral!"

The young man replied, unsmilingly, that possibly he might teach a thing or two to some admirals.

The King, vastly amused, asked him if he also could teach a thing or two to some Kings.

I saw the youth meet the King's merry challenge with cool, undaunted eyes:

"Sir," said he, "I could if I dared."

"Very well," cried his Majesty, laughing, "I give you every permission. So, Sir Harry, you shall instantly make good your boast, and tell me these things you know, and which I ought to know, and do not!"

The young man's face flushed and turned grim with suppressed impulse.

Then, of a sudden, his self-control seemed to give way, and he burst into a reckless, impulsive, passionate appeal:

"Sir," he cried in a voice which rang loud in the splendid room, "if your Majesty listens I care not what others think of what I say in this moment of departure.

"And I say this; that your Majesty's fleet ought not to be sent against the Dutch, but against the French!"

The King's mirth turned to astonishment.

"Is this a jest?" he asked.

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"By God, sir, no! it is no jest. France plays you false, sir! The French King sends young Frontenac to amuse you while the old Count robs you of your colonies in America!"

The King looked over his shoulder at us, and, relishing the situation, began to laugh.

"Sir Harry! Sir Harry!" he said, "you have a good head for fighting, but a weak one for politics, I fear."

"Sir," cried the young fellow impetuously, "if England delays to declare war upon France, she loses America! For, as God hears me in this moment, America, one day, shall become a greater England to lend us her loyalty and strength, or she shall become a monstrous France and destroy us all!"

The King, laughing at first, was now plainly becoming bored by this impassioned jeremiad.

He began to saunter about, shrugging his shoulders, glancing now and then across the salon at us—particularly at Frontenac who stood stiff with fury beside us.

Finally he interrupted the youth with a yawn in his very face:

"Sir Harry," said he, "you appear to know everything within the range of human knowledge; yet there is one thing you do not seem to know, which is that politics have no place on the quarter-deck."

"Sir!" cried young Quarles, "there are political plots today in every captain's cabin, and conspiracies in every forecandle! There is discontent in dockyards, revolts in Jersey and Guernsey. . . ."

"Enough," said the King sharply, and turned his back upon him.

It is not well to have a King turn his back on one.

I looked at Sir Harry Quarles; chagrin flamed in his face. It was an agreeable face, not handsome, but so

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young and frank that one was conscious of its fine honesty and candour. I was sorry for the youth whose only fault seemed to be a too vehement loyalty.

Sir Harry
Quarles

The King approached us, laughingly, for he was immensely amused that we should have been obliged to listen to Sir Harry Quarles' denunciation of France and of young Frontenac's mission to keep him amused, while old Count Frontenac plotted to drive England out of America.

François de Frontenac was in a towering rage, but was too much of a courtier to show it, which, I think, afforded the King further amusement.

However, he pretended not to notice it and gave his hand to my cousin of Elven; and the Vicomte offered the like attention to me—but, like the vulgar beast he was, took advantage to press my finger-tips and cast killing glances at me as we proceeded.

We were proceeding through the matted gallery—for the King was to walk in St. James that afternoon—when suddenly, there in front of us, I saw Gribouri.

For a moment I felt a faint, sickly sensation, and a weakness in my legs.

He did not seem to have seen me. He stood aside with other gentlemen who had been walking in the matted gallery, and, as they did, bowed deeply while the King passed and the court followed.

It was a beautiful afternoon in the Park of St. James. There the King promenaded to take the air, attended by all the court; and there it was made unpleasantly plain that the King was mightily taken with my cousin; and that Frontenac regarded me as property of his own.

The King was ever whispering to the Baroness d'Elven, and laughing a great deal; and seemed fascinated when

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my cousin turned her great blue eyes on him and made with her mouth a scarlet O.

As for me, what with my increasing disgust for François de Frontenac, my alarm and astonishment in discovering Gribouri, I was not enjoying myself. No. Because my troubled thoughts were on Gribouri, and what was his design in coming here.

It was certain that he had followed me almost immediately; and had obtained information at Calais that a Recollette nun had gone aboard the *Province-Rose*.

I knew not what harm he could do me here in England. He could, I supposed, threaten to discredit me at court unless I listened to his impassioned advances. What a miserable business to happen to me just as I had arrived!

However, what, after all, could be accomplished? If he ran to my cousin with tales, or even threats, she would laugh at him. If he ran to François de Frontenac who wanted me for himself, the Vicomte would send him about his business.

It might be more serious if he approached the King with the story of my father's passionate act of high treason.

I knew not what to think or to do, and, as I walked in St. James, my eyes were ever on the alert to spy about me and discover if this man had followed me.

Is there anything more uncomfortable than to feel you are pursued by somebody who meditates mischief?

Well, the King soon had sufficient air to revive his spirits; we all followed him back to the Palace, and then took our coaches and chairs and returned to our own apartments for refreshment and repose.

I did not speak to my cousin about my encounter with

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Monsieur Gribouri. There would be time enough if he annoyed me.

But while we were in her wardrobe examining gowns, she whispered to me that the King was for a frolic that night, and had begged of us a rendezvous at the Spring Gardens—which was a pretty place of entertainment near to Charing Cross, where one went discreetly masked.

CHAPTER XX

OUR first day at Whitehall tired us. My cousin and I had been standing up nearly all day long.

I own that my feet and back were considerably fatigued, and I was glad to seat myself and be rid of my shoes. So our maids heated water and disrobed and bathed us; and in our lace chemises we sat like Turks together upon a large soft sofa, and ate sweets and gossiped and peeped out of the open window to see what might be doing below in St. James Park.

It was pleasant to be rid of our clothing and repose at ease among cushions by the open window. Summer breezes ruffled our hair and caressed us; I took my cousin's lute upon my lap and tuned it. Sometimes I hummed a little air, sometimes stirred the lute strings into soft accompaniment to our idle gossip.

The maids had opened all the boxes containing my cousin's hats; and, sitting there, we tried them on, every one of them, and had four maids holding up mirrors before and behind us and on either side.

One of my cousin's pages came to announce the *Vicomte de Frontenac* who at such a time had the impertinence to invade us; but we denied ourselves to him, and scarcely noticed the baskets of fruit and the great bouquets which he sent to us from the King's gardens.

So he went away, and we peeped out of the window and saw him get into a chair, and noticed that the bearers wore the *Duchess of Portsmouth's* livery.

I asked my cousin whether our mission imposed upon us such duties as making masked rendezvous with Kings.

The idea made us very merry, and I laughed like a

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little fool—I know not why—but my head and heart were becoming light with folly, and I felt like one who, for the first time, steps upon the stage to play her part in the world's gay comedy. As for the tragic muse, my talents lay not that way, and I heartily hoped I had done with her forever.

My cousin, lying among the silken cushions like a flower, told me something concerning this King of England; who, unlike the late King Charles, was a man of sloth; of little enterprise, little taste, and less wit.

His mistresses he chose from among the Queen's maids of honour—not because of their beauty, for that they certainly had not!—but because they were conveniently near.

However, nobody desiring to avoid mischief ever really was in danger from this rather timid monarch because resistance on the lady's part very quickly discouraged him, and, like some stolid ox, he shuffled on to browse elsewhere.

"Which is why, *ma mie*," explained my cousin, "that it is ve'y safe fo' us to f'olic with his Majesty; and need nev' singe ou' wings, but ca'y all as gaily as we used to play '*Su' le Pont d'Avignon*!'"

I touched my lute and sang:

Sur le Pont d'Avignon

Tout le mond y dans en rond . . .

while the Baroness swung one dimpled knee over the other and swung her foot to time the measure.

"—Quite safe," she repeated, "like F'ancis Stua't a-playing with him all day, 'I love my love with an A because he is Atwocious! I hate him with a B because he is Bebete'. . . ."

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"He is," I said, "—to have encouraged that poor young captain and then turn his back on him merely because he was too stupid to parry truth with a jest."

"That young man was ve'y bold," said my cousin; "what he said would have meant the Bastille, in Fwance."

I began to laugh: "Did you see Frontenac's face?"

"Yes. And I saw Lady Portsmouth pulling that beautiful fan into bits of twisted gold and b'oken ost'ich plumes."

"Mary Mother, she must have been angry!" I murmured.

"She was, *ma mie*, and so was his Majesty and F'ontenac. . . . That young Captain can have ve'y little common sense to make a powe'ful enemy ev'y time he opens his mouth."

"He spoke rashly because he loved his country. It was honest of him, I think."

"An ass," said my cousin, "is an animal which is inconveniently honest."

"Better an honest ass than a dishonest wit," I said.

My cousin's blue eyes became ironical and her mouth formed a faultless O:

"This young man—do you pe'haps wecollect his name, *ma mie*?" she enquired so innocently that I took the bait, as innocently:

"Yes," said I, "he is Sir Harry Quarles, Baronet; and his ship is the *Deveron*, frigate. . . ."

Then I saw the pretty mockery flicker in her eyes; and I reddened and began to laugh.

"*Corbleu*, Madame!" said I gaily, "I do not deny that I find these handsome Englishmen very much to my taste. . . . Although that young man is not nearly as handsome as many. But—but—"

"I beg you to continue, my cousin!"

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"Alas," said I, "there is to be no continuation. For he sails against the Dutch tomorrow. . . . Otherwise I should have been very glad to have made his acquaintance."

She put one arm around my neck and kissed me: "Exquisite diplomat that you have become," said she, "to meditate sentimentally upon a man who has but to open his mouth to offend two Kings and two kingdoms and ev'ybody of consequence in both!"

So we fell to talking about other things; and my cousin had conceived a most amusing plan for the evening which was mischievous enough to delight us both.

For, in London, ladies and gentlemen of fashion almost always went out masked for a frolic, and delighted to appear at balls and gay assemblies where they had not been invited.

And the Duchess of Portsmouth had told her how two of the Queen's maids of honour, Miss West and Miss Bonner, had dressed like two orange-girls, and had gone about all night and into all sorts of places, reputable and disreputable, without being recognized but once, and then only by that old rake, Lord Brouncker, who gave them a pretty scare before he let them go.

The idea enchanted me. Among the fruit sent to us by that silly Frontenac were several baskets of ripe oranges. So we despatched a page with a letter to the Duchess of Portsmouth, begging her to procure for us from Miss West the two orange-girls' costumes, and also two masks against necessity.

Like children we giggled over the adventure; the gay indiscretion of it enchanted us. Never would we have ventured to do such a thing at home; but to be utterly at liberty in a foreign land seems to go to one's head.

As for the King, of course he would come masked;

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so nobody could know it was he who played swain to two orange-girls at Spring Gardens.

Well, my cousin and I supped in our apartment in spite of several amorously discontented notes from Frontenac brought to us by one of his gentlemen in service.

Finally the Vicomte himself came to our door, and very rudely knocked; and, refused admittance, vowed that we used him cruelly and that he'd be damned if he'd sup alone but seek kinder company elsewhere.

This having no effect save to make me giggle, he swore like a devil and went stamping about the corridor, and presently took himself off in a towering rage.

"That beast," I said disdainfully, "had best learn his lesson now that I am weary of his attentions and shall endure them no longer."

"*Doucement, ma mie,*" cautioned my cousin; "he has the King's ea'."

"And I'll box *his* if he plagues me," said I, "for he shall not spoil my pleasure at Whitehall as my only day at Versailles was spoiled for me by another man."

"Who?" asked my cousin.

"Well, then, Gribouri. I had meant to tell you. He attempted to take me by storm. . . . And, cousin, he has followed me *here!*"

"Oh!"

"He has. He is here. I saw him today in the matted gallery."

"Oh!"

"I don't know what he means to do. He may try to revenge himself. He may run to the King and inform him that I am not Mademoiselle de l'Ombre, but Mademoiselle de Maniscamp. But, as long as you condescend to amuse the King I shall enjoy his protection, too, I suppose. Shall I not?"

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"Of co'se."

"Very well, then," said I gaily, "I snap my fingers at Monsieur Gribouri! Let him run to the King! Let him run to Frontenac! What does it matter while you lead the King by the nose?"

Up went her eyebrows and she made an O at me; and I caught both her hands and made her dance *Avignon* with me and curtsy and bow as little children do, singing the ancient song.

And now we ran into her chamber to examine the dresses that her page had fetched from her Grace of Portsmouth.

Everything was there even to the kerchiefs. My cousin chose the gray habit and I the brown, and we called to the maids to strip us and aid us to array ourselves.

Such merriment! And when my lovely cousin took a basket of oranges upon her arm and began to march to and fro calling, "O'anges! O'anges! Sixpence each, milady!" I never beheld anything so adorable.

As for me, I decided to be a ballad singer and carry my cousin's lute; and I assure you we made a proper pair of vagabonds, and as saucy as you please as we sauntered impudently about the room, arm in arm, and our noses in the air for any gallants who dared presume.

My cousin sent a page to fetch a hackney coach to the mews; and when he returned to say it was there we ran down the back stairs and climbed into it, and bade the fellow carry us to Charing Cross.

And about the time we arrived there I think we both began to be a little frightened.

Such crowds! But, after all, our safety lay in crowds. None were like to look at us twice where thronged all manner of people on a night in summer—honest folk with wife on arm to take the air; young gallants crowd-

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ing by on mischief bent; painted women of the streets strolling, loitering, plying their trade; urchins running with shrill cries and chasing one another through the flickering lantern light; soldiers gathering before wine-shops; sailors from the dockyards on their way to the river; old dames a-knitting at open doors; old gentlemen hobnobbing in coffee houses. And, in the roadway, peddlers' carts set with torches; hackney-coaches creaking to and fro; a calèche galloping; a great carrosse with outriders shouting, rolling toward some great mansion or palace; everywhere a vast noise of voices and of wheels.

Some young men stopped my cousin and would buy oranges, but she lost her courage, and we took to our heels.

Of our cowardice, however, we became ashamed; and presently we ventured to peep in at the open door of a wine-shop where some, seeing us, called to us to come in.

So we went in, and my cousin sold some oranges, but would not sit upon any man's knee or be taken by the chin. I sang a ballad in French and played on my lute and danced very modestly.

Which was not to their liking, for they demanded an English song and a jig. Mary Mother! I did not know how to jig, nor knew I any English songs, so, edging bashfully to the door, dropped them a curtsy. And then we ran once more like a pair of frightened hares, my cousin spilling all her pennies and a few oranges.

CHAPTER XXI

THAT honest folk must consider us no better than women of the town we knew well enough. Nobody in London expects to discover virtue in an orange-girl or in a ballad singer, either. But therein lay our safety. For, had it been suspected that we were ladies of fashion masked for a frolic, all the old libertines and merry blades abroad would have come swarming upon our heels.

As it was we encountered more than one young gentleman who had a careless eye for adventure, even with an orange-girl; and there was one old ruddled rake who dogged our heels and pinched us until we took to an alley and ran for our very lives.

Now, for a while, we were well lost, and dared not enquire our way to Spring Gardens for fear folk would suspect that we were not the vagabonds we seemed.

Presently, however, we arrived again at Charing Cross; and, not far beyond, saw the trees and coloured lanterns of Spring Gardens, and chairs and coaches arriving or waiting outside the wall.

Now, when we presented ourselves at the gateway, under the arch of lights, they were not for admitting us, saying very bluntly that this was no resort for street gipsies and strolling trollops.

But my cousin very calmly put on her mask; and I put on mine. Then, under the kerchief on her bosom, she showed them a great jewelled chain and laid one lovely jewelled finger across her lips.

Whereupon they smiled and instantly showed us every

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respect; and it was, "This way, milady!" And, "Graciously be pleased to enter!" And so we strolled in among the trees and lanterns and marble statues where both music and fountains played discreetly, and flowers bloomed with no discretion at all. Paths led away into dusky nooks where were tables under pretty little bowers; and in these we noticed lively ladies and gentlemen at supper, or masked couples cooing and billing unabashed.

Sauntering arm in arm beneath the lime trees in fragrant blossom, we presently took off our masks and cast bashful glances about us to see if we might espy the King.

Yet, if he truly were here among these masked gentlemen promenading, how should we discover him? God knows he was not so marvelously made of body or limb that nature proclaimed him an Apollo in any guise.

Also he had not the quick and merry eye of gallantry, and might prove too dull to recognize us in our disguise, even without our vizards.

But, after strolling about for a little while and suffering the careless glances or indifferent observation of all whom we encountered, we concluded that his Majesty had not yet arrived in the Spring Gardens.

"Let us seek a seat in one of these discreet bowers," said I, "and there await our Jupiter who may arrive in any guise to woo us. As for me, I starve, and could be won with food very easily."

So we seated ourselves, and set the oranges upon the table. My cousin selected one, poked a hole in it, and sucked it. I did the like.

And, after a little while, as no Jupiter appeared in a cloud, or afoot, we sent for some champagne and little cakes.

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I behaved quite vulgarly—I know not why—but my crossed feet rested upon a convenient stool of reeds, and I lounged like any lackey a-sucking of my orange, and sustaining the gaze of any who passed with hardy impudence and perfect self-assurance. And I am very certain that any gentleman passing took us for the trollops we seemed to be.

Presently a waiter fetched our chilled wine and filled our glasses; and I was about to lift mine to my lips which, except at Versailles, had, hitherto, tasted only water reddened by a very little Burgundy, when a figure sauntered out of the tree-shadows into the light of our candles.

He wore spurred boots, sword, and mantle, but no mask; and I knew him instantly. And why I blushed so hotly I know not; but felt the swift blood heat cheeks and throat; and took my crossed feet from the stool in confusion.

I saw that my cousin, also, recognized this gentleman, for up went her brows and O went her mouth, and her blue eyes fluttered with laughter.

The young man, noticing our amused observation of him, paused before our bower and looked at us rather solemnly:

“You seem monstrous merry in there all by yourselves,” said he, “but a gay heart is to be envied in such times as these.”

“Milord,” said I in English, “is your heart then as sober as your visage?”

“Perhaps, my pretty gipsy.”

“Then,” said I, “will your lordship cheer your solemn features with a taste of wine? For,” said I, “it was made in France, and contains in it all the sunshine and lightheartedness of France. And I offer it to you with all the hospitality of France, and all the friendliness and

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gaiety of a heart that is entirely French." And I held out to him my wine.

He was courteous. He took the glass. "Little gipsy," said he, "I drink to your wonderful red hair!"—he turned toward my cousin—"and," said he, "I drink to your blue eyes; for," said he, "I swear I never have seen such pretty girls in all of England."

I jumped up and curtsied with a flourish of my skirt:

"Sir Harry, you overwhelm us," said I, demurely.

"Oh," said he, "you seem to know me? Well, then, mine is a contemptible memory that hath not retained your names and features, gentle gipsies."

"Michelle la Rousse," I said. "And my comrade, Athalie the Orange-Girl of the King's House."

"Well," said he, "your names make you no lovelier than God made you. You shall sup with me," he stepped aside to summon a waiter who came a-running; and we could hear our gallant commanding a most noble supper of unfamiliar English dishes and several wines also unknown to us.

I looked at my cousin, stifling my laughter.

She fluttered her eyes like two blue butterflies; and silently her lips formed the word: "Gwacious!"

"Are you frightened?" I motioned.

"Pooh! But—the King?"

"If we put on our masks," said I in a whisper, "how can the King know us?"

"Oh."

"Also, I had rather talk to Master Quarles than to his Majesty."

"Has this poor young gentleman bewitched you, *douce amie?*"

"Oh, cousin, he is such a solemn youth! God sends him to us to cheer his heart—"

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"Hush," she whispered, "—that man yonder among the trees seems to watch us. Look, Michelle!"

I turned to look, but saw nobody.

"Well, he has gone," said my cousin carelessly. She put on her mask, and I did the like.

"Now," said I, "let Fate and kings do their worst; for I mean to enjoy myself with a free heart and send this poor young man to sea with a little human gaiety in *his*."

However, on his return to us, our solemn Master Quarles seemed to be considerably amused to find us masked—as though such lights o' love as we had any need to hide our brazen faces. We did not blame him for his smile and thought.

And first he begged leave to buy of my cousin all her oranges, which he did, and paid her a gold piece in her hand with a "God bless you, pretty child!" And to me he gave a newly minted guinea and begged a song of me whilst we awaited supper.

"Milord," said I, "I am French and know no English songs to entertain you. Not even a filthy catch."

"I suspected as much by your charming speech," said he; "but I beg you to sing some modest song in French, because I like and understand your language."

"Very well, milord," said I, "you shall listen to a modest *chansonette* in which a little bird ought to tell you something, yet I fear you will never understand its twittering." And I took up the lute and sang:

*Celui qui mon cœur aime tant
Il est dessus la mer joli,
Petit oiseau, tu peux lui dire—
Petit oiseau, tu lui diras*

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*Que je suis sa fidèle amie,
Et que vers lui je tends les bras!
Petit oiseau, tu lui diras ça,
Que je suis sa douce amie!*

"Why, you enchanting child!" he said, laughing, and slipping his arm around me, "what man could remain insensible to such flattery!"

But when he would kiss me I turned my head and pushed him away. "No," I said, "I sing of love but do not practice the silly passion. . . . And, anyway, what devil's virtue does a gentleman look for in street singers and orange-girls?"

"As for virtue," said he, "I had not been in quest of that—"

"You never know where you'll discover it, milord—possibly even in Whitehall—" I jerked my fingers free of his and sipped my wine.

"*Ma mie*," said my cousin, "be mo' disc'eet, I beg you."

"I have no discretion when I am hungry," said I. "Let me but sup indiscreetly and I shall repent with all the discretion in the world. Meanwhile," I added, frowning upon our gallant, "*must* you press my waist within your arm?"

He merely drew me the nearer; and his was an arm of steel under his blue damask doublet and hanging sleeve.

I sat ashamed with lowered head, and my restless fingers avoiding his until he captured both my hands, and so, embracing my body, kissed my cheek and throat and naked shoulders till they flamed.

I dared not look at my cousin; I struggled free of him, and retreated to the corner of the painted settle, pulling

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down my russet petticoat over my russet shoes and crossing my legs under me.

"Milord," said I, "if you lay the Dutch aboard with as stout a heart as you strive to carry me, why, God help the ship that will not strike to you!"

He laughed and laughed and kissed my fingers, and said they were idle and beautiful as any ladies' in the world. Then, as he grew bolder—

"Holy Mother," said I, "have done a-fiddling with my kerchief! Would you undress me, sir!"

I gave him a hearty push and sat flushed and scowling, reknitting my disordered kerchief which now revealed my shift of finest lace, and smoothing down my skirt which disclosed that my stockings were pure silk.

"Do you think," said I, "that this is Berkshire House and I Barbara Villiers?"

I ventured to glance at my cousin who was signalling to me that we had better go at once. But I did not choose to.

"Sir," said I, "you are far too enterprising. But I shall not run away like the next Dutchman you chase, but give you gun for gun. . . . And, maybe, take you!"

"Little gipsy," said he, "you go very finely clothed under your humble russet. Are you other than you seem?"

"Does my shift resemble the Duchess of Cleveland's, sir?"

At that he began to laugh so heartily that I felt inclined to laugh, too. As for anger, it would have been senseless, considering the rôle I played which invited all things from anybody.

"As for my rustic russet," said I, taking up my lute, "it pleases me in spite of all the Captains in the world!"

I sang,

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*En passant par la Lorraine
Avec mes sabots,
Rencontrai trois Capitaines
Avec mes sabots!
Ils m'ont appelé vilaine
Avec mes sabots;
Je ne suis pas si vilaine
Puis que le fils du roi m'aime;
Il m'a donné pour étrenne
Un bouquet de marjolaine,
S'il fleurit je serai Reine,
S'il y meurt, je perds ma peine!—
Avec mes sabots.*

My Captain laughed and clapped his hands; and at that moment they fetched our supper and spread it before us—Mary Mother!—there was a dish of mussels in their own juice; another of delicious prawns and another of tender pigeons; and there was a pasty, and fruits and wines!

I was famished and lost no time in dipping into the simmering, clove-spiced juice with my mussel shell, and swallowed the saffron-tinted morsels.

When we came to the prawns, we had become very friendly and merry, and we sat a-cracking them and sipping our Madeira, and rinsing our fingers in silver bowls, the very best friends in the world.

“God send you victo’y when you meet the Dutch!” lisped my cousin, lifting her glass; and we all drank it and waved our glasses crying: “*Vive la flotte Anglaise! Vive notre petit Capitaine!*”

Delightful sensations were invading me; a charming sense of peril mingled with my gay self-assurance, for I was ever obliged to remain on guard against my gallant who was much too free with my person to suit me.

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I think the wine was singing in his head as well as in mine, for it presently set his lips a-singing, too:

*Though Wind and Tide warn me away
My heart is anchored in thy breast,
And there, imbedded, bids me stay,
Nor sail the sea in honour's quest;
So grant me, Sweet, a moment's grace;
Though Glory press me in her arms
Thy soft embrace and lovely face
Are more to me than all her charms!*

But I laughed and bade him hoist his anchor because my breast was not the haven it seemed to him, and might breed storms to wreck the boldest.

"And also," said I, "it is not the fine lace that covers a gipsy's body but what's under her skin that should warn you. . . . And the little dagger in her garter."

"Ve'y true," said my cousin, "and you would find it ve'y dang'ous to meddle with us."

They fetched us water and napkins and we bathed our lips and fingers while chilled wine was poured for us.

"Well," he said, "all pleasures end, and I should be on my way to my ship. . . ." He pulled out his purse and stood up to pay our reckoning.

Then from the peg behind him he took his shoulder-belt and sword and put them on, and cast his cloak over his left shoulder.

I know not what there was about this young man that his going gave me a tiny stab.

"Sir," said I, "I feel your anchor tugging in my breast. Pray hoist it more gently."

He laughed: "I know what hurts you," said he, and laid his purse, heavy with gold, upon my knees.

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Spite of the rôle I played, it hurt me, and I threw the purse upon the table.

"Why," said he, "is there too little to win even a smile from you?"

"Take up your wine glass," said I, "and I will give you a lesson!"

He lifted it, perplexed; I lifted mine:

"Sir," said I, "champagne is not a wine; it is a language. The language of diplomacy. Let it speak for me and counsel you."

We drank.

He set aside his empty glass; looked at the full purse of minted gold; looked curiously at me.

"Why do you refuse?" he asked.

"The diplomacy you have absorbed should teach you."

"It is French and I English. . . . I must go. . . . Will you unmask and kiss me, little gipsy?"

"No—not unmasked."

He leaned over and took me in his arms. God knows why I suffered his lips and made no stir in self-defense. He lifted me bodily from the settle up into the air and held me so, close clasped, and laughing like a very boy.

As he set me down and released me, over his shoulder I saw a masked man come swiftly out from the dusk of the lime trees, followed by two other men also masked.

My cousin, also, saw them, and she caught my hand in hers.

"Gwacious," she whispered, "if it should be the King!"

"We had better run," said I, "but in different directions. Take the path through the flowering shrubbery and meet me at the gate—"

She caught up her lute, glided into the thicket and ran; and I was already gliding away among the trees when somebody grasped my arm and drew me back.

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"What frightens you, little gipsy?" asked my Captain, drawing me to his side and passing his arm around me.

"Holy Mother," said I, "let me go, for those three masked men frighten me. . . ."

"Well, then," said he coolly, "no man need frighten you when my arm shelters your body."

Holding me he turned and looked at the three who came slowly toward us across the grass. They all wore green cloaks and green masks and looked alike as three peas in a pod.

"Sir," I whispered, "if they affront us you are not to quarrel, but take me to the gates and set me free."

But he said quietly that he knew how to take care of what was his and needed no instructions from a gipsy girl.

Two of the men came forward and stood staring at me very insolently as though their gaze could pierce my mask.

Suddenly I freed myself and turned to run; and at the same moment one of the men sprang forward, seized me, and brutally stripped the velvet mask from my features.

"By God!" he cried, "here's one o' them!"

The words had not left his lips before my Captain had him by the throat and gave him such a buffet that he reeled.

Then, oh God! everything happened and was over in an instant, as I cowered from the three swords which seemed to clash and glitter and dart lightning all around me.

Flattened against the lattice of the little bower I crouched speechless, my eyes dazzled with the swift fury of the swords, my ears ringing with their clamor.

I saw a masked man drop his weapon and clutch at his breast, and sway to and fro like a drunkard: I saw

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another man spring forward; saw a sword pass through his green mask and rip it away; saw him tumble flat. And there, under my horrified eyes, lay young François de Frontenac. Even I could see he was dead.

As I stared at him, I saw the third man in the grip of my cavalier who dragged him toward me across the grass to my very feet.

"Now," gasped my Captain, "take off your mask and make amends before I fling you into the kennel from whence you came!"

Very slowly the figure lifted one hand and drew the green mask from his features.

The King stood there, his cold eyes ablaze.

In my straining throat the scream froze. I saw the deathly face of my Captain staring at ruin.

The King looked at Sir Harry Quarles, at me, at the dead man on the grass, at the other who had fainted, and who lay against a tree, his mask hanging from one ear. Gribouri!

In a silence so frightful that it seemed to deafen me and stop my heart, I saw my Captain slowly reverse his bloody sword and slowly tender it to the King.

Suddenly all my terrors burst out in a cry of despair: I sprang forward and pushed away the sword:

"Are you mad!" I said; "if you give him your sword he'll take your head, next!" I seized my Captain's arm and dragged him back, crying: "You are as good as dead unless you fly. And I am worse than dead unless I do the like!"

The King turned on me in an ashen fury, but I clung to my Captain's arm to pull him away.

Then, in a voice hoarse with passion, the King demanded his Captain's sword; and my Captain answered as in a dream: "I know I am a dead man if I give your

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Majesty my sword. . . . So I shall keep it to use in England's cause—which is not *yours*!

"Sire, for England's sake, I should slay you where you stand. . . . Because you have undone England and betrayed us every one. . . . You are a bad King. You are worse; you are a stupid one."

The hot blood was raging in the King's face.

My Captain slowly sheathed his sword: "You dare neither to tempt my sword," he said, "nor to cry out for very dread of such a scandal, knowing well enough in your rotten heart that England will endure no more from you!"

He put on his hat:

"Your enemy may be Orange," he said, "but England's foe is France. What honest man cares any longer who *your* enemy may be? So fallen are you in every honourable estimation—with your prostitutes and your bastards and your treacheries to God and man. . . .

"And if I am taken, and my head blacken on a pole, nevertheless your course is run and England shall presently spew you up. . . . As, one day, all kings shall be vomited and the sick world purged o' them forever!"

He turned his back on the King and walked away through the grove; and I ran after him and took hold of his sleeve:

"For God's sake, sir," I said, "I am worse than dead if you abandon me."

"I abandon nobody," said he, speaking like one still confused by shock. "Where do you wish to go?"

"Anywhere out of England and away from kings!" I cried.

"That is where I go also," said he.

He was walking, now, with a swift stride, and I held fast to his sleeve and ran beside him, knowing that I was

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indeed done for if he deserted me. For what with Gribouri and all that threatened me in France, and with what now had happened to me in England, my cousin could not save me from arrest.

It terrified me to think of young Frontenac, dead—slain by the hand of this very man whose sleeve I clutched as I ran along by his side.

Frontenac dead, Gribouri wounded,—a double and deadly insult to the two most powerful monarchs in the world. And my presence as a mere witness was enough to insure my punishment and utter ruin.

"Sir," said I, so frightened I could scarcely speak, "your life hangs by a hair, and you need not burden yourself with me."

"Well," said he, "do you want to be whipped at a cart's tail and rot in prison?"

"I desire n-neither, yet would not hamper you. . . ."

"I've two horses in the mews. Can you ride?"

"Yes, sir. . . ."

We came to the wall where was a painted gate that led into the mews in the rear.

There were a few saddled horses. A soldier, holding two, caught sight of my Captain and hastened toward him, leading both horses at a trot.

My Captain said to me: "Walk on ahead until I call to you." Then he spoke to the soldier; and both mounted.

I heard their horses walking on the road behind me, but I hastened on until I came into a wide, unlighted road where the houses were dark and not a soul was afoot.

Now they quickened their pace and presently overtook me. My Captain bade the soldier dismount and lift me to the saddle, adjust my stirrups, and wrap me in his cloak.

"Now get you aboard the *Deveron*," said my Captain to the soldier, "and tell them that I mean to take my

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fill o' love tonight, for there is like to be a dearth of love betwixt the Dutch fleet and our own."

The soldier went away laughing; and, when he was gone: "Come," said he to me very quietly, "or the world ends presently for us both."

We rode off down the dark and silent road, side by side.

"Best walk our horses till we win clear o' the houses," said he in the odd tone of a dreaming man. His voice seemed dreadfully to be a part of some monstrous vision from which I must awake if I could find voice to call out. But my throat was ever closing against the cry that strained for utterance. All was cloudy and unreal in which my darkened mind groped through the darkness of vast disaster.

His voice was sounding in my ear again: "You tell me you can ride astride?"

"Yes."

We continued to walk our horses. I looked up at the spectral houses. Starlight splintered against the little diamond panes.

Presently he put his horse to a canter, and I did likewise. It made some noise on the stony road, and sparks flew.

I balanced my saddle well enough, but my limbs were tender, for I had not ridden postillion since I was a child, and dressed like any page.

"Little gipsy, are you at ease!" he asked.

"I am well enough."

"Well, then, do your best in this hour! Gallop!"

He spurred his horse. I struck mine with both heels, and he bounded forward into a grand and powerful stride.

Then we settled us in our saddles to ride for the lives God gave us, and which kings would take away.

CHAPTER XXII

FOR a long while, now, we had been riding through driving mist which, at times, became rain.

There was a watery light in the east and a wet wind blowing when we arrived on the heights above the shore and urged our weary horses along a wall toward an iron gateway beyond.

I was nearly dead of my journey; my legs and thighs seemed paralyzed, and I could not stir to descend from my saddle. But milord got off his horse and seized a wire-wound rope which dangled outside the wall; and I heard a little bell begin to tinkle inside the gate-lodge which I could not see.

Very soon a powerful, shaggy fellow came out, in his shift and bare feet, carrying a lighted lantern. When he saw milord he cried out in surprise and set his lantern on the grass and hastened to unlock the great gates.

"Lord, sir!" says he, "to see you home again! We thought you had sailed, Sir Harry. . . ."

But milord cut him short: "—What craft, if any, are lying off the new wharf?" he demanded.

"A snow, out of Wales, with salt; a Breton ketch from le Pouldu, with sardines; a Sheerness pilot. . . ."

"Pressed for the fleet?"

"No, sir, he sails presently for . . ."

"Hasten to the wharf and hold the pilot for fleet orders."

The man ran out of the gateway, crossed the road, and clambered down through the yellow gorse and thorn-set rocks toward the water which I could both see and

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hear dashing against the shore below us with a hollow sound that swelled and roared and slackened in my ears.

Milord took my weary horse and his own by the heads, and walked swiftly toward a house built of blackish, weathered worn stone—a dark, wet, heavy mass, its chimneys lost in the flying mist above.

“Are you spent?” he asked, looking up at me over his shoulder.

I forced a smile: “No, sir, but I think my legs dropped off some few miles back.”

“Better legs than head,” he said as we came to a kind of terrace set with a row of battered urns in which flowers drooped soaked with rain.

He left the horses standing; went to the portal and set another bell a-ringing.

Then he returned and lifted me out of my wet saddle.

I could scarce stand at all, so he took me up into his arms and stood waiting, his sombre eyes wandering over the great dark house. I looked up into his grim young face, and knew that he was bidding this house farewell.

Lights began to glimmer behind darkened windows; an inner door creaked open; there was a confusion of voices; a scurrying; rattle and clank of bolt and lock.

Into a dim hall strode milord carrying me cradled in his arms; up a low stone stairway where the arras stirred along the windy walls; and entered a chamber where stood an ancient bed hung in blue and made in the Fourth Henry’s times.

To the half-dressed servants huddled around the door he gave his orders in a calm, unhurried voice; then he laid me upon the bed; and an old dame bent over me and began to draw from me my wet clothing.

Two red-cheeked, dishevelled maids came with a great copper in which water steamed.

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"Holy Mary," said I, "would you bathe me while milord stands yonder!"

But he had laid a telescope upon the window's edge and was standing motionless, gazing seaward, and noticed me not at all.

Presently he carried his telescope into the chamber beyond; and I heard servants' voices and his own, always calm and gentle, giving his commands.

The sting of the heated water aroused me to quick pain; but when they had dried me and were oiling my body with lily lotion, nard, and balm of bergamot, I became drowsy.

A maid fetched mortar and pestle and a lump of chalk from the cliffs, and made a fine flour of it. With this I was powdered to my toes and left lying under the sheets.

I slept; but it could not have been for long—time to dry my clothing; which the old dame showed to me all piping hot, and drew it over my galled and stiffened limbs and body.

When I was dressed again in my wrinkled russet they helped me out of bed, and I made out to stand, and, presently, to move about.

Milord sent a page to me saying that a chair was ready, and that I should hasten. So, on the old dame's arm, I hobbled down to the terrace where bearers, in faded blue livery, waited with a tarnished chair lacquered in blue and gold.

Across the shorn lawn they bore me through a rain that lashed the gilt-framed windows; out between high gateway posts where two dripping stone leopards crouched; thence along a crumbling viaduct and down an ancient fortified way bordered by broom and gorse and black-thorn, to the water.

Here ran a sea-wall of gray stone with a breakwater

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and two wharves of timber. Beyond, the gray river widened into a vast estuary, over which a high mist was flying like smoke.

Beneath, slanting bands of rain trailed seaward.

They carried me to a wharf of timber and across two planks which rose and fell with the tossing deck of a sloop warped alongside.

Here milord lifted me out, and without ceremony carried me across the wet and rocking deck and down into a little cabin where he set me upon an arm-chair.

"Is all well, sir?" I whispered.

"I know not if Tilbury Fort and the dockyards have been warned to stop us; but we should pass out Sheerness unnoticed through this mist and rain, I think. Have you ever been to sea?"

"The Channel."

"Did you sicken?" As he spoke the cabin floor tilted, dipped violently, and my chair slid to the wall.

"No, sir, I slept. . . . We are cast off and moving, are we not?"

A faint smile touched his features: "We are at sea," said he, "and if it mean no more than that to you, why, I do not think you need dread any sickness bred of the sea."

As he stood there, balancing against the pitching and tossing, I noticed that he had changed his handsome attire to the rustic russet of some sober country squire—but wore a shoulder-belt and sword.

A sailor-lad came from the galley with an earthen pot full of steaming broth. Milord had broken his fast, but he held it steady for me whilst I endeavoured to eat with a great pewter spoon. Bread, also, I had, and a cup of claret wine; and we pretended to be merry when the rolling of our craft threatened to upset all.

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But milord's young face was gray with care and lack of sleep; and, when I had eaten, he left me to go on deck.

I heard the hollow thunder of the wind in our sails; I heard the whipping and swishing of rain squalls sweeping the deck above; the ripple and clash of waves; the wind-blown shouting of the master; the echoing pad of naked feet running to obey.

Once I thought to hear the booming of guns, but it may have been the far sound of surf along some reef.

A dim gray light came through the little ports, washed out in greenish darkness now and then as the seas drowned our deck.

I lay deep in the leather chair and slept at times until some lurch awoke me. But always the deep, sweet sense of utter rest possessed me, and I dozed and slept or lay dreaming awake as snug as a child in its gently rocking cradle.

I was awake when milord came down the ladder-stairs and threw off his great shepherd's cloak.

"Foul weather," said he, "but God's own gift in our necessity."

"Is all well, sir?"

"So far."

He went to the bunk, which was but a built-in bed, and laid him down upon it, saying he would sleep a while. Flat on his back he slept there all that afternoon; I watched him, and he never stirred where he lay with his worn young face as still as death and his two hands clasped together upon his breast.

I know not what hour it was, but it was dark when I heard him stir and sit up.

"Gipsy?" he said sharply.

"Yes, milord."

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"Ah—I think I was dreaming."

"Of me, sir?"

I heard him get to his feet, yawning:

"Yes," he said with another yawn, "I dreamed of that damned Garden. . . ."

He was feeling his way toward the little stairs, and as his sleeve brushed by me I took hold of it and drew his hand against my lips.

"Well, then," said he with a kind of laugh in his voice, "is that a ceremony you think fitting?"

"Does one cut one's gratitude to fit the fashions, sir?"

"You have a pretty way with you, little gipsy—"

"Sir, my name is Michelle."

"Michelle. . . . I say you have a way with you. Well, I have done nothing to deserve those reverent lips of yours. . . ."

"Holy Mother," said I, "you have risked your head to save me from a cart's tail and the prisons!"

"Well," said he, laughing, "that's what a man's head is for, is it not? . . . And I know not what I am to do with you in Holland," he added.

"Are we for Holland, milord?"

"Surely. What else remains to us?" He felt for my face in the darkness; passed his arm around my neck, cupping my cheek in his hand. For a little while his fingers stroked my face, idly, gently. Then: "Michelle, are you burnt?"

"Burnt?" I repeated.

"With the *fleur-de-lis*," he said gravely.

My face flamed against his hand:

"Holy Mother," said I, "do you think such shame of me?"

"I do not know why else you fear France, who are French."

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"Milord," said I, "I am well born; only a terrible misfortune hath overwhelmed me and made of me a vagabond."

He was silent. Somehow I seemed to realize that he had heard such tales before from other girls who had drifted as lightly across his path as I had.

My face burned again; but I would tell him no more at this time. Nor at any time unless he learned to know me better.

"Well," said I, "I am not branded with the *fleur-de-lis*, and you may see my naked shoulders if you think I lie to you. . . . But I suppose that is nothing to you. So leave it with safe indifference, and think only that a poor young girl is grateful, and prays very willingly in your behalf."

He thanked me; stood absently caressing my cheek for another moment, then he moved away, groped for his cloak, and went out into the darkness.

It seemed as dark as the pit of hell in the cabin. The seas had become heavier, and it was becoming difficult for me to keep my seat.

About an hour later milord came with a lantern; and a sailor-lad followed him carrying a dish of bread and meat, and a measure of wine upon a pierced and fitted tray of wood.

We were running, milord told me, without lights; and were off the Nore and driving before a gale that carried us toward the French coast despite our efforts to stand for Flushing.

As for the fleet, he said that it lay between Tilbury and the Lower Hope, and Northfleet; and he said that the Admiral would not proceed to the Nore but lie inside until this gale abated. Which seemed to ease milord's mind, because, he said, one of the yachts might chase and over-

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haul us; and he admitted that this had weighed upon his spirits in the estuary off Gravesend, and all the way as we passed out the North Foreland.

"But Lord," said he in his boyish way, and laughing, "here am I a fugitive and a beggar who yesterday commanded a King's frigate; and yonder in Whitehall sits a King who awaits news of my taking and hath chosen where my head shall sit and sun-dry upon the Traitor's Gate.

"And with all this to plague and confound me, as we passed, but now, the Windmill Hill where no beacon blazed—thank God!— I thought that this foolish King had once lived there, and had been a good and brave Admiral when he was Duke of York. And I was sorry that he had fallen from such fine estate to a green mask and mantle and a night's brawl at the Spring Garden."

"Milord," said I, "you are generous—with men."

He was eating; he looked up at me: "Well, am I niggardly with women?"

"Not with your gold."

"Hah! In what, then?"

"In your thoughts, sir—sometimes."

He frowned: "I am sorry for the *fleur-de-lis*. I meant it not unkindly—only to know why you dreaded France."

"Sir, you dread England, yet none would ask you if you carry a broad arrow branded upon your person."

He reddened and gave me a haughty look as though to rebuke the comparison between a Quarles and a singing girl of London streets. It were bootless to touch on that in this hour. I knew it. He never would believe me. Or, if he did in a measure, what was I doing in such a garb at the Spring Gardens? And what could he think except that I was no better than the Queen's maids of

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honour who were but the King of England's harem after all!

"Mother of Mercy," thought I, "when every Duchess is *galante*, and no gentleman knows in whose bed he may awake, is it likely that this young man believes me honest?"

Which both angered and saddened me; and there came over me a great loneliness thinking of my father and the shelter of his name and home.

Bitter on my lips was my first taste of the world where a single day had ruined me at Versailles, and another at Whitehall.

My God, I knew not what to do, or what was left for me to do if this young man abandoned me.

But how long would his patience drag me with him by the wrist—a clog, a care, a burden—a girl of London streets, in his mind, or, at best, a Queen's maid of tarnished honour caught in a deadly scrape.

What could I ask of him more than he had done for me when we arrived in Holland? What could my cousin, the Baroness d'Elven, do for me, who herself must stand upon her own defense and fight the suspicion that my presence in her entourage was certain to arouse at Versailles!

That she would be sent into exile upon her own estate, there to await the pleasure of the King of France, seemed certain. Further than that there could be no danger to her.

But my father and I were done for in France; and I, now, in England. And I knew not how ever I was to discover my father or what on earth was to become of me.

I did not know I was weeping where I sat with head a little bowed; but a hot drop fell upon my folded hands; and I hastily averted my face from the lantern light.

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Milord, who was drinking his claret, set it aside and placed his firm hands over mine.

"Courage," he said pleasantly.

"Oh, yes, sir, with all the w-will in the world!"

He said frankly: "What is your purpose, Michelle? a friendly hand to help you to a living, or something easier. . . ."

"A f-friendly hand. No more."

"I do not please you?"

"Yes, sir, you do. . . . It were vain of me to tell you I am honest. . . ."

"Well, then," said he, smiling, "you shall tell me nothing, and it matters nothing. I shall not abandon you until you are secure. Or"—he laughed—"until you abandon me."

"My God, sir, even were I what you think, I could not be so infamous!"

He smiled very kindly. He was young, but I could see he knew the world, and men, and counted very little upon the goodness of either.

He gave me his hand and led me to the bunk-bed, and made me lie down upon it, bidding me have a care that the violent movement of our little craft did not fling me out of it upon the floor.

"You have no fear, have you, Michelle?"

"Neither of you, sir, nor of the sea. . . . We have a motto—but I will not weary you. . . ."

"Say it," he said with grave curiosity but with utter unbelief.

"Did you ever hear of the Counts of Aulone, sir?"

"No, Michelle."

"Nor had I, who am an Aulone, heard of Sir Harry Quarles. . . . Well, then, this is our motto: 'Fearing God alone.'"

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"A fine one, and rings of the First Richard's days!"

"It is older, milord."

He bowed pleasantly. No doubt he thought me some dependant who had served the family. Mary Mother, what was the use of words! Or of what avail the truth from a girl who had been found masked and russet clad in the Spring Gardens of Charing Cross?

A kind of despair seized me where I lay upon my bed looking up into this young man's coolly pleasant eyes. So courteous was he, and yet so little he considered me even as a slightest plaything for an idle hour's amours. . . .

I closed my eyes and felt my lips quiver. . . . So less than nothing could I ever be to him. . . . Street refuse. Chiffon a-flutter upon a thorn. I felt the tears soaking my closed lashes. All the woe of a friendless soul was welling in my heart to overwhelm it.

"Good night, Michelle!"

Suddenly I felt his lips on mine, gentle, cool, in light embrace: and—God knows why—I flung both arms around his head and clung sobbing to his lips like some frightened, hunted thing at bay driven to the world's edge.

There were no words for my grief and fear and desolation; all I could do was weep and cling to him like a damned thing to a cross while the storm swept and scourged me; and presently exhausted me so that my arms fell from him and I lay with my face against the blanket, breathing like something done to death.

He sat by me in silence until I slept. Let God remember that of this young man.

CHAPTER XXIII

TWICE during the night the violence of the waves threw me out of my bed and left me groping in darkness; but I was not bruised, and crept back to my blanket on hands and knees.

A golden gray light filtered through the ports, and I was not asleep when milord came down into the cabin in his wet shepherd's cloak and took hold of the door to steady himself. I had been thinking of him and of what I had done, and I blushed to meet his gaze. But his solemn visage was careworn and gray with salt, and he stood wiping it with his sleeve to clear his eyes.

"Michelle," he said, "I have bad news."

At that I sat up on my bed and he made his way to me and sat down on the bunk's edge.

He said: "The storm has blown us into Dieppe. We have neither provisions nor water; and we must land and attempt Holland by any route convenient."

"Could you not send ashore for water and food?" I asked. "Or, at worst, continue toward the Dutch coast?"

"No. We have no ship's papers. Moreover, the forts hold us. Also, inside lie two English vessels—a frigate and a yacht; and already the frigate has signalled our master to go aboard."

"Do they mean to take us?" I asked, frightened.

"They can know nothing of us, yet. But our master is a Sheerness pilot, who thinks he has been lawfully pressed by our fleet below Tilbury Fort, and held by me at my house of Quarleswood to take out the Red Squadron. The Captain of yonder frigate knows that much, and calls our pilot aboard him for explanation."

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"Milord," said I, "it matters less for me, but it is a question of your head. So in God's name let us go ashore as soon as may be. . . ."

"Our long boat has gone to the frigate," he said, "but a fisherman lies alongside us, and will land us at the stairs if he can."

He gave me his hand and threw a cloak about me; and I got from the bed to the floor. Stiff, sore, stumbling at every step, I contrived with milord's aid to gain our deck.

All around us through a mist the sun spun a golden glory.

There, almost under our rail, were houses huddled along a quay, and folk walking in a stony street so near that I could hear the distant click and clatter of sabots and the cries of fish vendors in the misty glory of the sun.

"Do as I do," said milord calmly, "but I shall go first to catch you if you miss your footing—"

He threw a leg over the rail; I looked down and saw a boat rising and falling on the waves just under us. Down went milord, holding to a rope; and, standing up in the rocking boat, held out his arms for me.

Over the rail and down I scrambled stiffly, and let go as his arms embraced my knees.

There were two pairs of oars; the fisher lad plied one, milord the other; I crouched in the stern; and the boat shot away over misty, sparkling, tossing waters which dashed against the quay beyond and flooded wharf and stairs with glittering foam.

I know not how we contrived to land; I should have fallen had he not caught me and carried me to the street above.

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One thought alone possessed me—that now milord's head was not to blacken upon a pointed stake; and I clasped his hand very tightly as he paused to ask a passer-by where was a decent tavern to be found in town, and how we might come there.

Clinging to his hand I turned with him up a wet and sunny street which ascended from the harbour, and which was thronged with people. And it made me anxious to notice how many soldiers there were in the town, for I saw Red Gendarmes and Blue Dragoons and soldiers of the Bourbonais Regiment. But what really alarmed me were Gray Musketeers walking or riding through the streets, and I dreaded lest some officer from Versailles notice us and recognize me.

Yet who could know me in my peasant's russet and rough cloak; and milord, too, was russet clad like any petty country squire who had come to town on proper business.

The tavern we sought was the Poule d'Argent; but when we came to it there were many officers' horses standing at the door, and servants, lackeys, *piqueurs*, and soldiers moving between mews and kitchen, and a great bustle everywhere.

Milord thought it safer to enter where were crowds than to be conspicuous in a quieter tavern; so we went in among the soldiery, and milord asked for a room where we might breakfast in privacy.

It was given us, though the landlord trimmed his manners to our humble dress and bearing, and a careless servant led us through to the rear where was a court faced by whitewashed buildings with a gallery of wood running all around and outside stairs.

Up these we followed the servant who was rudely whistling and jingling keys; and presently were shown

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into a small, shabby parlour to which a bed-chamber was connected.

Here milord commanded a breakfast; and, when the servant had gone away, he looked at me, and I saw care fall from his features like a wrinkled mask, and his smile break out in sudden sunlight.

"I never thought," said he, "to find my head upon its proper neck at this hour; or that my legs could ever carry it as far as France. Lord, what a pickle we were in last night! And when the King unmasked I was like to die of shock!"

His smile became bleak and his mouth grim; he began to pace the room and his gaze grew sombre and remote.

Presently he halted in front of me where I sat upon a settle:

"They knew me. I was not masked. They offered me the insult, stripping your mask from your face who were under my protection. Could I have done other than I did when I took this Frontenac by the throat? . . . And they drew first! . . . Who was that man I gave a wound to—the handsome youth I stretched by the tree?"

"Armand Gribouri."

"And who is he?"

"A confidant of the King of France."

"I hope," said milord savagely, "that I have ruined that alliance with my sword."

He strode about the room for a while.

"Well," said he coolly, "I am ruined and am a beggar at this hour who had thought to hear the Dutch cannon thunder within a week. . . . Gone—everything. House, lands, honours, command, ambition, hope!"

He shrugged his shoulders, took off his shoulder-belt and sword and hung them upon an iron hook.

"The King willed it," he said. "Did he suppose his

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pimps and bullies could strip you of your mask, and I hold my hand?"

My eyes filled, and I clasped my hands as I realized all the mischief I had wrought and all the ruin I had brought upon this young man.

He cast a sharp look at me and said: "Have I reproached you who are nowise in fault? Well, then; if it had not been you it might well have been another. What does it matter? The King's bullies, under the King's eyes, laid filthy hands upon my honour. . . . They are paid, I think."

"Yes, sir, but your ruin overwhelms me. . . ."

"Yours is a gallant heart and tender," said he in his kindly way, "and need not be distressed regarding me. For I shall not sit idle. No. There should be employment somewhere for a man who can sail a ship as well as take a King by the throat and shake him!"

His quick smile broke again, and I could but think of some freckled country boy with the mischief grinning in his unspoiled eyes. So young milord seemed when free of care and trouble. . . .

They fetched our breakfast and laid a clean cloth at a pine table for us; and the saucy waiter had become abject and servile toward milord who had commanded the very best bottle that the cellar afforded, the tenderest capon to be garnished with larks; and—Holy Mother!—a dorade! Which fish is so savoury and so scarce that when it comes to the net the fisherman gains a year's profit in an hour; and the golden dorade is sent post to Versailles by swiftest relay.

There was, needless to say, no dorade to be had; we ate whiting, but the mere command had so impressed our host that presently he came a-waddling and puffing himself, all bows and deference, and begged us to overlook

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any lack of attention. Because, he said, the town was crammed with soldiery, and his inn so crowded that he had no quarters to offer our quality save only these mean ones so unworthy of our exalted rank.

Milord merely laughed; and I enquired why there were so many troops in the town. And there, God help me, I made so terrible a mistake that we both had been like to perish of it. And yet, after all, it hath left me where I am this day; and I think it was God's will and purpose that I should have shown my ignorance of what was passing in Dieppe.

Well, then, when I asked my question, the landlord seemed astonished, and darted an odd look at us out of his little eyes. Then he sucked in his mouth of a fat carp, seeming to remember his manners; and he bowed and bowed—to gain a little time to think, I suppose—for when he faced us again he was sleek and humble enough and his small reddish eyes were suffused with benevolence.

"Madame doubtless knows," he said, "that the town is in a state of siege since the dragonnade, and that there has been fighting outside the walls."

"Oh, yes, we know that," said milord carelessly, "but there seem to be more soldiers than usual in the town."

There was nothing else to say. The landlord bowed and bowed and begged to know whether we had found the wine to our liking.

When milord dismissed him, and he had gone, I rose unsteadily and felt my knees trembling.

"What have I done," said I, "that this fellow should pull so false a face?"

"Why, the damned town is in a state of siege," said he, "and we should have known it had we come here lawfully."

"I do not understand. . . ."

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"The fort set signals against us," said he, "and our pilot will be held in the harbour unless the English frigate contrive to take him out. But any English deck meant death to me, so I paid the fisher lad to smuggle us ashore."

"Wherein, then, lies our danger, sir?" I asked.

"We have no papers," he replied quietly, "and our landlord knows it, now."

He rose from table and went and looked out of the window. I knew not what to say, so overwhelmed was I that I once more had been the instrument of this young man's undoing.

When I could find and command my voice: "Sir," said I, "if you can escape on any pretense out of this inn they can do me no harm when they come here and discover me. . . ."

"No," he said coolly, "I would not abandon a mouse that trusted me. . . . I liked not that fellow's mouth of a sucking fish. No. . . . No, nor do I trust any man who prospers after a dragonnade. I should not have let him leave this room, but taken him and stuffed his carp's mouth with my napkin and tied him like a hog. And carried you forth upon my arm under God's guidance. . . ."

He stopped and we both listened. There came ominous sounds from the court below. Then he went to the iron hook and took from it his shoulder-belt, and put it on.

"Never await an enemy," said he, "but go to meet him." He took me by the hand: "Come, Michelle," said he, "and we shall very soon see if anybody means to stop us."

He drew me along with him while, in a stifled voice, I begged him to seek safety for himself and abandon me who stood in no such peril as did he.

But the English are stubborn where they think their

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honour is concerned, and he strode out to the wooden gallery, drawing me along beside him.

In the courtyard there seemed to be nobody. At the back door, however, I caught a glimpse of our landlord peeping up at us. He dodged inside at once, but milord also had noticed him.

"I think," said he, "the rascal has laid information against us. But we have no other choice except to face what threatens."

He halted a moment when we had descended to the courtyard, and looked about for some rear exit. But the place was a trap; the way out lay through the tavern.

He said in a quiet voice to me: "If they detain me I shall say you are some little gipsy light-o'-love I found in England, but do not know you. And you shall swear it, and win free o' them if you can."

"And you?"

"Does it concern you?" he said impatiently, loosening his sword hilt under his shepherd's cloak.

"My God, sir, if you think me without honour you shall learn I have a grateful heart, at least."

"Yes, and valiant, too," said he gently. "But, little gipsy, it avails me nothing, for I shall not live to be set aboard an English deck."

"Is that what they would do?"

"Possibly. And I do not choose to chance it. Come, then; if we are stopped, you shall win free as we have planned. Come, then!—we part—with the best will in the world!—and God go with you through the world!"

I saw the reckless smile flash in eyes as he put his left arm around my neck and, holding me, thrust a purse of gold into my bodice between my breasts.

"That we part stainless," said he, "advances us a step toward Paradise, I hope. Well, then, God be with you,

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little gipsy. . . ." He took my face between both hands and kissed my mouth.

"And with you, milord. . . ." And in that instant, knew I loved him.

I took hold of his left hand; I could scarce see or think with the frightened tumult in my heart and brain—only a blind purpose held that I must share with him whatever fate awaited him.

When we came to the rear of the tavern he freed his hand of mine and opened the door. And there—oh, God!—were waiting Gray Musketeers, the corridor swarming with them, who instantly barred our way and demanded of milord our papers.

Milord began to answer quietly that lack of papers could not concern me—but I interrupted passionately, saying that I belonged to him and was his property, and if he had no papers to show them, neither had I.

At that a Gray Musketeer drew his sword and took hold of my arm, and milord caught him by the neck and flung him headlong among his fellows, knocking them right and left.

The next instant he had dragged me to the outer door and had given me a hearty push into the street.

"Run, little fool!" he whispered; and turned on the Musketeers like a wild-cat, holding them back at his sword's point.

I saw that he meant to die there. In an instant, around us a yelling rabble gathered shouting, "Kill the Huguenots!"

Into the wild mob rode Red Gendarmes, trampling everybody and striking right and left with the butts of their long pistols. A horse crowded close to me and almost crushed me against a wall; my ears were deafened by shrieks and curses; I saw the Gray Musketeers fighting

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with naked swords; I saw milord facing them with reddened blade which they beat upon but could not beat aside or overcome, so like a very snake it darted in their faces, striking them like lightning and biting through the swift confusion of the swords.

Then I saw a Red horseman spur toward milord, and lean wide from his saddle behind him; and I screamed a warning; but the Gendarme's heavy pistol crashed against his head and he went down under the frantic horse.

I strove to force my way toward the spot where milord had fallen, but Gray Musketeers seized me by my arms and pushed a path through the throng, kicking the rabble aside and cursing all who were in their way.

Down a narrow, unpaved street they carried me, then through dirty lanes and mews and across a paved square where, at a great gateway, stood more gendarmes on guard.

Here the yelling rabble which had followed us halted; the guards looked at me curiously as I was led under the stone arch, and directly through a doorway into a great, bare room where were some men sitting at a long table.

I did not hear what the gendarmes said to these men. One of them looked up at me presently and asked me my name.

"Michelle," I answered.

"Is that all?"

"Yes—Monsieur."

He wrote it down.

"Only the lucky know their fathers' names," he remarked. "How old are you—if you know?"

"Twenty and five months."

"As good a guess as any. Well, I need not ask you what may be your trade"—writing all the while.

"I have no trade, Monsieur."

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He smiled and wrote on. I knew what he was writing and it frightened me.

"You are writing down a lie!" I said; "I tell you I have no need to. . . ."

"Silence, *you!* No impertinence, do you understand? Well, then, where were you born?"

"Whatever I say you will write that I was born in the gutter. . . ."

"The gutter," he nodded, writing it down. "How does it happen you have no papers of identification? You women were numbered and licensed before the dragonnade."

"I came into Dieppe today."

"How?"

But I would not answer.

"It makes no difference," said he; and turning to a clerk bade him make out a commitment to the women's prison for one, Michelle, a prostitute, without papers.

CHAPTER XXIV

I WAS committed to the prison for women, early in July.

All through July, August, September, October, I remained imprisoned, utterly ignorant of milord's fate or of what was to be my own.

There were other women in the prison, petty malefactors, political suspects from remote villages, poor peasant girls who had been kind to Huguenots, women of the streets. I came gradually to know them all; I heard the stories of nearly every one. Some of these tales were terrible, some pitiful. It was my first knowledge of the horrors of life—of that naked, revolting existence of the ignorant and lowly which I never had even heard of.

But I heard of it now—all of it, everything—and nothing veiled—no least detail of misery, of hunger, of disease and vermin, of wickedness, of the treachery of men, or of cruel betrayals by lying women.

All the secret and terrifying phenomena of birth and death I listened to; whispers of pollutions unnamable; of passionate crimes; of deliberate evil wrought by careful calculation; of temptation to the starving when theft meant life and one must rob or die; of poor, untaught minds blinded by animal desire; of covetousness and gold-greed; of remorseless purpose that regarded nothing save its accursed goal.

In the beginning the awful horror of it overwhelmed me, and I thought I should die of it; and lay all day and all the night upon my straw, desiring only death and to be

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done forever with the world that terrified and sickened me to the very soul.

One never knows. A poor, timid creature of the Dieppe streets brought me, one day, a little cup of chocolate. I had eaten nothing that day; could not; and had not understood that one could purchase anything palatable in that prison.

This girl, Simone, supposed that I had no money, and so brought me the little cup of chocolate which she had paid for with the last coin that remained to her.

Now I still possessed the purse of gold which milord had thrust into my bosom at our tragic parting; and this saved me. For, with money, I soon learned that I could command the privacy of a cell apart, and free of vermin; and could keep my body clean, and need not starve on the black bread and herring and cabbage soup which I could not swallow, but which was all we had to live on in the women's prison at Dieppe.

Simone, of the Dieppe alleys—I mean the *bas-quartier* of the fishermen—died of a sudden flux in August; but she had not wanted for the pitiful little luxuries which my purse afforded.

They all came to me in the end, these miserable women, when they discovered that I had money. I sent none away; I aided whom I could. But it was terrible; and thus it was I came to know them and to listen to their atrocious stories—Mary Mother! I can not even now endure to think upon such wretchedness, and such evil as I never dreamed could be or have a name.

But all the women were not so utterly abandoned; there were, as I say, poor, ignorant girls who did not seem very guilty to me—petty pilferers of little things, who, tempted, had sinned for the first time. There were some who had given shelter to Huguenots in the dragonnade;

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some who had spoken ill of great folk; of priests who never had taken holy orders; of the King's guards.

One little peasant girl had gone with her baby in her arms to the Sacristan at St. Jacques and asked him what she was to do with their child. For that—and because of the laughter and scandal—they took away the child and committed her to the women's prison.

Another had been the mistress of the Town Major; and, when he abandoned her, and being with child, she went to the Fortress called the Château, and tried to poison herself in the guard-room.

Of my purse of gold I was very careful, never displaying it, sleeping with it tied about my neck in a little bag I made.

Our guards were men, dirty, brutish, bestial, and it made me feel faint and frightened even to speak to them when necessary.

The head jailor was not much better, though cleaner; and his wife was a great, fat, miserly, rapacious creature with a pallid, bluish skin, who washed corpses and made shrouds; and who, during the recent visitations of the plague in Dieppe, drove a dead-wagon to make money.

For everything the prisoners needed she made them pay through the nose; and when a prisoner had no money she went in rags and filth and lay on rotting straw.

The Governor of the Fortress of Dieppe, which is called the Château, had very little to do with the common prisoners in the women's or the men's prisons, which were built outside of the Fortress walls though commanded by the fort's cannon.

He never but once came near us while I was there; but sometimes an old sergeant of the Governor's guard came in to smell the soup—God knows he dared not taste it!—and sniff the herrings, and go grumbling to the

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kitchen where the head jailor's wife very soon put him to flight.

He was not an unkind man; he tried to make them give us better soup and fish. But he was afraid of the jailor's wife, and the Governor seemed indifferent, so nothing was done.

Meanwhile, every day—every hour of every day, and many, many sleepless hours at night—I tortured my brain with striving to devise some way of finding out whether milord was alive or dead.

If he were dead, then he was beyond the vengeance of the King of England. If he were alive, how was I to learn whether his name and rank had been discovered and he had been delivered to the English frigate, or whether he had been thrown into the men's prison.

From my barred cell window I could see it across a grassy slope encircled by a moat. Was he there? Was he healed of his wound? Was he well or ill—or dead? I dared not question any of our guards; nor the jailor, nor his dreadful wife. These vultures might have scented blood, and—if truly milord were a prisoner—pecked at him till they tore the secret from his very vitals.

My God, no! If he were a prisoner, then it meant that he was unknown, and, in so much, safe.

Time hung heavy. These were black days—dreadful now to think upon.

I had bought needles and a little fine linen to make shifts for myself. I had also, in my cell, a small store of charcoal; a copper, and a dish or two; and sometimes I could buy eggs and meat and carrots and make soup; and sometimes I had chocolate and a slice of white bread.

One day in October, when I sat in my cell, watching my soup which was nearly ready, the old sergeant from

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the Governor's guard came stumping and grumbling along the corridor.

When he passed my cell, seeing the door open, he stuck his head in; and I smiled timidly and bade him good day.

That was how our acquaintance began.

"*Bon jour, la Rousse,*" he grunted, sniffing the air; "that is good soup you make in your little pot."

"You shall taste it," said I, dipping out a cup-full.

He came in, muttering and grumbling, but he took the cup, sniffed it, blew the steam from it, and tasted.

"Good soup," he said. It was hot; he drank it very slowly, looking around him at my bare cell, at me, and through the barred window at the Fortress and the men's prison.

"Why did they put you in here?" he asked abruptly.

"I had no papers."

"Oh, the dragonnade."

"No; after that."

"No papers," he muttered, "and not a Huguenot. I don't understand."

"I came into Dieppe without papers. . . . Here, give me your cup. . . ."

I filled it again. Also I buttered a *tartine* and gave it to him.

"Be seated, sir," said I politely.

"*Peste,*" said he, "you seem to have been well brought up, all the same."

He sat down on my bed of clean straw, soaked his *tartine* in the soup and slowly munched it.

"How the devil did you get into Dieppe without papers?" he demanded.

"I had to."

"Oh, you *had* to? Then it must have been a love affair."

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"It was, Monsieur."

"Oh. Well, when in love, one goes crazy and does the impossible, they say." He soaked his *tartine* reflectively.

"Yes," said I, "my lover and I were arrested."

"What? He also?"

"He also. Yes, Monsieur."

"What the devil had he done?"

"Alas, he also had no papers. . . . You see we did not understand. We did not know that Dieppe was in a state of siege. We came in a little fishing boat—to enjoy ourselves. . . ."

"When was that?" he demanded.

I took his cup, refilled it, buttered for him a fresh *tartine*.

"I'll tell you," said I. "It was early in July. . . . And there w-was a—a little fight—with G-gray Musketeers. . . ." I was so nervous that I could not go on.

"Do you mean the fight at the Poule d'Argent?" he demanded. "Was that *you*!"

I nodded.

"*Bon dieu de dieu!*" he growled, "your lover gave them a devil of a battle! I say it who am a soldier and have seen wars! . . . A devil of a battle! Three Musketeers and two Red Gendarmes!"

"N-not killed," I faltered, terrified.

"No, not killed, but stretched. And they had to hit him on the head from behind before they got him. That was a sorry business. They should have let him fight it out. . . . And I tell you—though I would not have your jailor hear me—had it rested with me I would have taken off my hat to that young man. I am a soldier and no assassin."

My heart was beating to suffocation; I said: "For the love of God, Monsieur, tell me if they killed him."

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"*Hé!* What? Killed him? Well, no. One can't kill a tiger by hitting it on the head with a brass horse-pistol. No; nobody was killed. Not even your young man—though they ran their swords into him, too, and a horse kicked him."

"Where is he?" I whispered.

"In the men's prison yonder."

"S-sick or w-well. . . ."

"Mending." Then he got up and set the empty cup on the stone floor. "*Eh, bien,*" he grunted, "have I paid for my soup, *la Rousse*? Ah, you *are* very clever, very clever. . . . Too clever for an old soldier. . . . All old soldiers are fools. The heart softens; the brain softens. . . . So I thank you for your soup and I bid you good day!"

One day in November, while I was sewing, my old sergeant thrust his head into my cell.

"*Bon jour,*" he grunted.

"Come in," I said, smiling; "the soup is simmering, and I have made a *brioche*. . . ."

"I shall eat nothing," he growled; but he came in and seated himself on my bed.

Well, he had his soup and *tartines* and *brioche*, all the same; and while he ate and grunted and grumbled, he told me the astounding story of the revolution in England, and how, in spite of Lauzun's aid, the English had driven their King from England, and had welcomed the Prince of Orange to the English throne.

"And now," said he, "we shall have to fight England and her heretic King. The pot boils; the fat's in the fire; our King has sent old Count Frontenac to the new world to drive the English out of New York and Boston; and, if you ask me, I'll tell you that the English fleet will come

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over here and bombard us in Dieppe unless our admirals stand for the Thames with transports for fifty thousand men."

He was very much excited; he munched his *brioche* furiously and nodded his head and, between every bite, cried out, "Ha!"

I tried to realize that the King I dreaded most was now a fugitive—that the miserable, stupid man whose silly caprice and brutal folly had ruined us both and driven us out of England was now, in his turn, driven out by his own people who no longer could endure him.

I scarce knew what I was doing when I rose from my chair and went to my old sergeant, and laid my hands upon his shoulders.

"Will you take a little message to my lover in the men's prison?" I whispered.

"*Bon dieu de bon bougre!*" he growled, "do you take me for a traitor, then, la Rousse?"

"No, only for a good soldier who also is a kind one. . . ."

"Not a word will I take to him," said he, "though you may tell me what is in your clever mind—your mind which is too clever for an old soldier who never had a mind but only a mouth and eyes and a pair of ears. . . ."

I stood on tip-toe and, resting both hands upon his shoulders, kissed him lightly on the cheek. Never have I seen a man turn redder, or roll such enormous eyes.

"God will reward you," I whispered; "so tell him I am well; that I have money if he needs it; that I do not despair. . . ."

"Yes, yes—and that you love him. *Bigre de bougre!* I know. Do you think I was always old, la Rousse? Well, then—that you love him. Is that it?"

I nodded slowly: "Yes, tell him so. . . . And that if

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he is lodged on the west side of the men's prison he can see which is my cell because I shall tie a ribbon to the bars of my window; and that I beg he will do the like. . . ."

"*Bon dieu de bon diable!*" he growled. "What's all this accursed nonsense! No, not one word! Not one! So I bid you good day, and tell you that your soup was as good as your *brioche!*"

When he had gone I took a little pale blue ribbon from my chemise and tied it to a window bar. And stood there waiting and looking across at the men's prison.

About six o'clock, when the gray wall was reddened with the sunset, I saw something white fluttering from the bars of a cell window in the men's prison.

As long as daylight lasted I leaned there and watched it; and I prayed, sometimes; and sometimes wept with gratitude to God.

All through November and December, in rain and wind and snow, my ribbon hung or rippled from its iron bar; and the strip of white remained on the grating of his window.

It was in December that my old sergeant came for his soup and *brioche*.

"I'll not lie to you," he said; "your lover has been very ill. He mends slowly."

I dropped my face in my hands and the tears fell through my fingers.

"*Allons! De quoi! Bigre de bougre de nom d'un nom!*" he growled; "—when I tell you the young man is mending! . . . Where is my soup?"

I fetched it, and buttered his *tartine*.

"All cats have several lives," he said, "and what else is a tiger? Consider that, la Rousse!"

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But it tore my heart to know that milord was ill and that I could not do such offices for him as I so desperately desired to do.

"H-has he m-money?" I asked.

"Yes; and wishes to know whether you need more?"

"Oh, God, no! Tell him to use it all in comforts and remedies for himself. . . . Is he warm enough?"

"There is a fire in his fireplace on frosty nights."

"Has he medicines?"

"There is a physician from the garrison who visits him when necessary."

"Has he blankets? Clothing?"

"I asked him. He says yes. . . . He tells you to be of good courage and to keep warm, and that you shall let him know when you need money."

"Is—is that all he—said?"

"Well, I think so. . . . I think that is all, la Rousse. . . . So I shall say to you for myself that your soup is as good as your *brioche*; and so I thank you kindly, and I bid you good day."

And that was all: "—courage; keep warm; send for money when needed. . . ."

I turned and flung myself upon the bed. . . . So weary; so lonely; so sick with love was I. . . .

CHAPTER XXV

I REMAINED in the women's prison of the Fortress of Dieppe, called the Château, from the 17th of July, 1688, to the 3rd of June, 1690. Nearly two years of my life!

Prisoners came and went; women died or were taken to the horrible hospital which was more terrible than death; babies were born there, were weaned and taken away by Ursuline Sisters or died there. For the prison of the Château of Dieppe was only a smaller world and a smaller hell by itself.

During all that period my old sergeant came every two or three weeks for his soup and *brioche*. Through him I had news of milord and of the outside world; and how now there was an alliance made against France between Holland and the new King of England who had been Prince William of Orange; that there were like to be battles near Dieppe on land as well as at sea; that there was war brewing in the new world where old Count Frontenac had once more been made Governor of New France; that our King had ordered Frontenac to take New York by storm and spare only those who professed the true faith.

One day, in 1690, toward the middle of May, my old sergeant slipped into my hand a little fragment of linen rolled into a ball.

It was a note from milord—the first that ever I had received from him:

My little friend Michelle:

Tomorrow the Governor of the Fortress will appear at your prison and read to the women prisoners

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there a proclamation of the King of France offering to a certain class of prisoners their liberty under certain conditions.

I beg you very earnestly to accept these conditions no matter how humiliating. If you decide to respect my advice you will be good enough to display *two* ribbons at your prison window.

In that case, only, should I consider myself free to accept the King's offer in case it be extended to us in the men's prison.

In any event, however, I desire you to avail yourself of an opportunity which may not again occur for years.

I am, with every consideration,

Your comrade,
Q.

All that afternoon I remained in an agony of indecision. If only I knew whether he also was to be offered clemency. How could I accept if I must leave milord here?

But it was necessary that I give milord an answer. Two considerations decided me—that, unless I accepted his advice, he would not feel at liberty to avail himself of any offer concerning his own freedom, in case such an offer were made; and, secondly, it was milord's wish that I accept; and already my heart and mind were utterly inclined toward perfect obedience to his wishes and commands.

Toward sunset, therefore, I tied another ribbon to another bar of my window. And, after a few minutes' watching, saw two white rags hanging from his window; and so knew that he had understood.

I slept poorly; the iron bell on the Château marked for me the dragging hours. I heard the Fortress sentinels

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calling from post to post through the long night watches; I heard the sick coughing in their cells; the sleepless sighing; the shuffling tread of prowling guards.

With dawn came a blackbird to sing and trill under my window. Listening, I fell asleep.

At eight o'clock I got up, made a little fire, dipped water from the barrel in the corridor and set it to heat.

By nine I had bathed and eaten a *tartine* and a bowl of chocolate. Sunlight streamed through the bars of my window, but the men's prison was still in chilly shadow.

Now, against my going away—if that was to be—I made a bundle of my linen and the few shreds and trifles that I possessed, and tied all in my russet cloak.

My clothes were worn and ragged, and scarce held for all the patching and darning; but they were clean and free of vermin, as was I—which seemed a miracle in that place.

A guard came to take away the slop-bucket; and he said to me that all prisoners were ordered to assemble in the great hall where we were accustomed to promenade for an hour every morning.

I heard many women passing the corridor on their way thither; and very soon I heard a trumpet sounding in the Fortress, and, presently, an uproar of drums.

I ran to the window and saw the two rags still hanging from milord's grille. Then I hastened into the corridor where crowds of prisoners were moving toward the great stone hall beyond.

Here I saw Red Gendarmes moving about, laughing and jesting with the prisoners, and ranging them along the walls into a hollow square so that we all faced inward in a single rank.

There was great excitement among these women; bursts

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of nervous laughter; shrill greetings between comrades; broad pleasantries; the impatient shuffling of worn shoes on the stone floor, or the click of a country sabot.

Suddenly, from outside, came a loud rolling of drums. The Red Gendarmes hurried along our ranks pushing us back into our places and crying out: "Attention, there! Stand quietly! The Governor is coming to talk to you. No conversation; no whispering; no giggling! Remember your manners and salute your Governor with respect!"

From the rear of the vast hall came a deafening blast of trumpets that startled everybody. Soldiers appeared and made a lane through which came a little man in a rich uniform all fluttering with ribbons.

On his right walked a Jesuit; on his left a nun. Behind him came his secretary with a portfolio, followed by two clerks and two Blue Cavalrymen with drawn swords.

When the Governor arrived in the centre of the hollow square which we had formed we all curtsied, and he returned our politeness with a slight inclination.

Two guards carried in a table and three chairs; the Secretary opened his portfolio and presented a document to the Governor who immediately took off his plumed hat and said in a shrill voice:

"De par le Roi!"

And put on his hat again.

Then the Secretary bowed and the Governor handed him the document and sat down.

It was the Secretary who read the proclamation. It was full of pomp and sounding phrases, and the intent and purpose of it all was this:

That the population of New France, or Canada, had not increased sufficiently to satisfy the King. That, among the French, there seemed to be very few who cared

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to emigrate, in spite of every encouragement given them to colonize the French possessions in the new world.

Settlers were needed, particularly women. There was a great scarcity of women in Canada where young men desired wives.

Therefore, as an inducement to certain classes of prisoners in the Fortress of Dieppe, his Majesty offered freedom and a passage to Quebec under the following conditions:

No woman branded with the *fleur-de-lis* could be accepted; none diseased; none crippled; none past the child-bearing period.

The ages to be preferred were between sixteen and thirty.

The healthiest and comeliest would be the first selected among the volunteers to inscribe themselves.

The contingent was to number no more than one hundred and fifty.

To every one accepted a pardon was offered; a dowry when married to a colonist; and land and farming implements sufficient to begin a new life in the new world.

Those accepted were to be placed in charge of three Ursuline nuns and taken aboard the great ship, *Duchess of Burgundy*, which now lay at Dieppe.

Wind and tide permitting, the *Duchess of Burgundy* would sail for Quebec this day at five o'clock.

The Secretary bowed to the Governor and presented the parchment. The two clerks laid open two ledgers and placed pen and ink convenient. The Governor said in a squeaky voice:

"Prisoners who desire to volunteer under these conditions will inscribe themselves immediately."

A tense silence fell over all. Nobody stirred. I heard one woman whisper to her neighbour: "Not I. Better

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die in a French prison than among savages and wild beasts."

"Come!" cried the Gendarmes, walking along our lines, "a little good will, now! Who is to be the first to accept his Majesty's pardon? Who is the first brave girl to inscribe herself and win her freedom and a good husband and a pretty farm in the beautiful new world?"

"*Et le Peau Rouge?*" came a mocking voice.

"*Ils ne sont pas si sauvage,*" returned a Gendarme, laughing; "there's many a pretty girl far fiercer than the Indians of America."

"And the lions and wolves?" demanded another voice.

The Governor looked up, irritated; there was a silence. Then, all alone, I stepped from the ranks and walked across to the table.

To the Governor I made a curtsy; and heard him say to his Secretary: "There's one who has been well brought up."

I leaned over the table, took the quill, and wrote:

"Michelle Larousse, age twenty-two, born in France, no profession, sound and well."

"Religion?" asked the clerk.

"I was born in the true faith, Monsieur."

He wrote it down.

My example started a procession toward the table. I think that nearly three hundred prisoners inscribed themselves.

The Gendarmes ranged us in a double file; the Ursuline nun led us to the corridor where we were told to go to our cells, make packets of our effects, and return as quickly as possible.

When again we were in line, each holding her little bundle, we were marched by the nun to an antechamber. From here, one by one, we went into the cabinet of the

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Fortress physician. That was the most difficult of all for me.

Many did not care; others were afraid, and with dreadful reason; and I saw girls come out weeping, and others flushed and impudent, defying everybody with a mocking laugh.

Well, on some was discovered the *fleur-de-lis*, and on others tokens far more terrible; and some were too old, and others wasted and unfit.

Of the three hundred, or more, one hundred and seven only had been accepted.

These were placed in a double file. Led by the nun and attended by Gendarmes we walked along the corridor, out across a courtyard, then through the *salle de garde* and under the high arch into the streets of Dieppe.

Here armed horsemen awaited us and formed a cordon around us; and behind them thronged a noisy, jesting rabble, crowding on all sides to get a glimpse of us.

First we were taken to the Ursulines; and there every girl was stripped by the nuns, bathed, her hair washed, and then trimmed to her nape. Then we were dressed in clean, coarse linen chemises, wool stockings, plain, thick-soled shoes with pewter buckles, little starched caps for the head, kerchiefs for the breast, and a bodice and skirt of gray peasant wool, cut short, and laced at the bosom with leather points.

However, we were permitted to carry our little bundles; and in mine were my silk stockings and my fine chemise of lace—but God knows why I remembered them as, once more, in double file, we passed along Dieppe streets, led by three nuns, flanked by Blue Riders, and the roar of the running rabble in our ears.

When we crossed the bridge to the lower quarter where lived those engaged in all sea-trades, I saw the masts of

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a great ship towering high along the quay, where, above the spider-web confusion of wires and ropes and cables, were bright flags flying.

The ship was the *Duchess of Burgundy*. She lay a little way off the quay. There was a kind of covered stairway descending from her deck to the water; and to this we were rowed in boats from the water-stairs by fishermen who had assembled there to convey us.

The quay above was crowded with curious people who watched us embarking, and who called out to us in jest or insult as our boat was pulled away from the water-stairs.

I went in the first boat with ten other girls and a nun. I asked one of the fishermen who was rowing whether he had taken any men aboard from the Fortress prison; and he said he had; and that only five had been selected who had volunteered to serve as soldiers in New France.

I was trying to describe milord to him when the nun told me to be silent and concern myself with men only when I arrived in the new world.

When we reached the ship there were sailors on the shaky stairs to hold our boat and help us aboard. The nun went first; I next. I never before had been on so great a ship.

Upon the deck were many sailors and a few soldiers, and high above on the poop deck I saw gentlemen who seemed to be officers.

But of all this, and the cannon, and the wilderness of cordage and piles of rope I heeded nothing, for my eyes were searching everywhere for milord, and a terror had come upon me lest he were not on board.

Some sailors led us below to the women's quarters where we were shown our little pallets of fresh straw whereon we were to sleep. There was no privacy save for the three nuns who had a little cabin to themselves. Here

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we must live, sleep, eat, sew, and lie in sickness or in health until we landed at the earth's ends.

The girls were arriving, now, in succeeding boatloads, and all came swarming to the waist of the ship and below to the women's quarters, to choose, each, her straw mattress and lay her bundle upon it.

The nuns attempted to keep order, but that was impossible, for these girls were like children released from school, and had begun to run all over the ship and make acquaintance among the sailors.

I started up a kind of ladder stairway to search for milord, and to learn if he truly were aboard this ship. A nun called me back, but I made pretense of not hearing in the hubbub and clamour of all those girls; and I hurried on, and came out upon a deck where were cannon.

Here I ran to a sailor and begged him to show me where the men from the Château prison were lodged. He led me along this deck to another stair-ladder, and told me to descend and that the men from the prison were to lodge there.

I ran down these stairs and came upon a small deck where were some mattresses spread.

Four men were leaning upon a cannon and looking out of an open port. One man lay upon his pallet.

And when I came near to him and looked down, I saw it was milord.

But oh, Mary Mother!—what a pitiful change was here, for he lay like a bag o' bones and his skin like wax, and inky hollows marked his eyes and made of his face a very skull.

He looked at me and tried to smile; and I fell down on my knees and took his head to my breast, and there held him and wept and laughed in wordless gratitude to God.

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When at last I found my voice I asked him how they ever had permitted a man so ill to volunteer for the new world.

Into his eyes came the ghost of that grinning, boyish mischief. He said:

"It was because of the fight at the tavern, Michelle, that the Governor wished me to volunteer. And the Governor's physician told him that I should recover if properly fed."

"Milord, did they starve you then?"

"I could not eat the food. . . ."

"But—you had money! Oh, God!—did you not have money! Did you give me all you had! And sent word you needed none!—fearing I might starve as you were starving—dying. . . ."

He moved his head away; and his eyes were hidden against my breast as a shy, tired lad turns to his mother.

I never dreamed what it was to love, before—the fierce passion of it, the jealousy lest any harm assail, the tenderness, the measureless compassion, the humble longing, the one and deathless desire deep as the soul's own depths, to serve. . . .

"Milord," I said, "is it fair that I am nourished upon your body—that the bright blood coursing in me is drawn from you?"

But he would not answer, and lay with his thin face on my shoulder and his deep gaze fixed.

"Well," said I, "the Ursuline sisters tell us that we may cook in the forecastle—wherever that may be."

He laughed.

"True," said I, "you are a sailor. Where may be found this same forecastle? For I mean to go thither and make a broth for you."

"Have you money left?"

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I looked at him and began to cry: "Oh, milord! Milord! I have the half of your purse of gold remaining."

"You must bribe the cook in his galley," he said. . . . "But I beg you to be at no pains, for I am little inclined to food. . . ."

"My soup shall incline you," said I, smiling in my tears. "The King, desiring to deliver us in plump health to the young farmers of Canada, has victualled us well; and the nuns tell us that there is good store aboard to satisfy us if the ship's provisions prove unpalatable."

He smiled and, for a little, lay looking at me.

"You are thin," he said.

"They have cut off my hair. But I am thin, also; and measure me an inch growth. And you?"

"I have done growing," he said, laughing at me. . . . "I shall fatten when I can walk about. . . . They carried me here upon a litter. . . . A compliment to my sword-play at the inn, they say."

"And your wounds, milord?"

"Now healed."

"Were there many?"

"A broken head. Two sword thrusts and some ribs kicked in by a Gendarme's horse. . . . I shall mend with the sea air. . . ."

He stopped, and I saw an odd stare in his eyes, and that they were fixed upon something behind and above me.

And when I turned my head I saw Gribouri standing at the stair-head and looking down at us.

The shock stupefied me, and I remained kneeling and staring over my shoulder at him.

Then he took off his hat and made me a bow; turned on his heel and walked leisurely away.

Now the terrible significance of it rushed over me in an access of mingled rage and fear, and, in that instant, I

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think I knew the fury of a tigress whose young are threatened.

Milord, who knew nothing of Gribouri except that he had stretched him in the Spring Gardens, lay watching me,

"What does it matter?" he said, "since England and France are now at war?"

Before I could answer a great hubbub arose on board—shouting of officers, loud cries of sailors, rattle of chains and cordage. From the high poop came a trumpet voice giving orders which rang out through the confusion.

"We are weighing and hoisting sail!" said milord calmly. "Go and look from the gun-port yonder."

I got up and went to the open port where some men were standing; and I saw them hoisting the accommodation stairs, and saw a great anchor come up out of the water dripping with slime and weed.

Overhead the clanking and creaking and flapping sounds mingled with the shouting and made a vast confusion in my ears. I could see and feel that our ship was moving.

Suddenly an explosion split the air and the sound seemed to strike me in the face. As I turned and ran to milord there came another report, and another.

Milord smiled as I dropped beside him:

"We are saluting the Fortress," he said.

When the deafening reports and the concussions had ceased he asked me, curiously, why I had seemed so overcome at sight of this Gribouri who could now do no harm to either of us.

"Your eyes and cheeks flamed," said he, smiling, "and I am wondering who this young man may be who kindles you to such blaze."

"Milord, he is nothing to me—so long as he does us no mischief."

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"Why did he come there to meddle with you at the Spring Gardens?"

"I do not know. It was the King's whim that my cousin should mask for a frolic and meet him there."

"Oh; your *cousin*?"

"I do not name her, milord, lest you think as lightly of her as you do of me."

"What the ladies of the Queen's household do is no concern of mine," he said coldly. . . . "And it is plain enough to me that you are no gipsy nor your—*cousin*—an orange-girl."

"Nor were we ever maids of honour, milord, but came with the French mission whose envoy you slew."

His lean features flushed: "A shameful mission," said he bluntly, "and hastened the King's ruin. . . . Was this man Gribouri, then, attached to the suite of young Frontenac?"

"No, milord; I do not know why . . . " But I did not finish, for lies stick in my throat, and I felt the hot wave of colour mounting to my very hair.

Milord looked at me and looked away.

"This man is nothing to—to me," I stammered.

"And less to me," said he, coldly; and he turned on his side and pillowed his worn cheek on his arm.

After a silence: "Milord," I said, "we are in charge of nuns, and I fear I shall be punished for my absence. But I promise I shall come again very soon and you shall have white bread and wine and a good broth. . . . And—and—I am ever your devoted s-servant; and pray for you every day."

He thanked me politely.

So I rose with a heavy heart, knowing he had no faith in my honesty, and that he never would believe that any chaste girl—either gipsy or maid of honour—ever had

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done what I had done that accursed night in London.

I received a dreadful scolding from Sister Agnes-Rose; but what could these three poor nuns do with more than a hundred undisciplined girls gone wild with excitement, intoxicated with their new freedom, and all wrought up with the astonishing adventure upon which they had so suddenly embarked!

They were running all over the ship, and a guard was posted to stop them at the quarter-deck, and clear them from the gun decks.

They laughed at the guards and the guards laughed at them—for they were a comely company, these little prisoners of our King, and, in many, was no harm, only natural vivacity and the heedless gaiety of wild birds.

But our Captain, Trouin-Malingne, who had commanded a *chasse-marée* in company with Jean Bart, posted a marine guard on our deck; and we became less saucy and more diplomatic when necessary to gain our ends.

To awe and frighten us and keep us under discipline, the nuns told us that we might be attacked in the Channel by the Dutch and English.

Indeed, from the ports we could see our escort of three frigates, the *Vipère*, the *Serpente*, and the *Alcyon*, cruising on our larboard quarter, and, to starboard, a brig and a brigantine, the *Guêpe* and the *Vengeur*.

But what armed guards and gentle nuns could not accomplish, the rolling and plunging of our great ship did. For now we were standing away under full sail and had to endure the full force of wind and sea; and many a saucy face grew pale and many a pattering foot stumbled and dragged less gaily across the heaving deck.

For me that malady born of the sea did not exist.

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Also my mind was too fearfully occupied to be thinking of myself or dreading lesser ills.

In prison I had exchanged some gold for a bag of silver crowns; and with these and with a pleasant face and modest manners, I found my way to the fore-castle. Here, very easily, I became friends with the chief cook, Gillasse, whom I had no difficulty in bribing; and who told me that I had been well brought up, whatever crimes I had committed. He let me use his coppers and his earthen pots when he was not cooking for the Captain's mess.

For the rest, the great kettles of soup, the peasant bread and ship biscuit, the salt fish and salt meat were not unappetizing. The pork never stank; no *petites bêtes* were burrowing in the bread and flour; onions, carrots, cabbages seemed clean and sound, and the wine and cider, though crude, were what the crew, and what the girl-prisoners could drink without cursing. God knows the provisions aboard the *Duchess of Burgundy* were like a King's banquet to us who had been in the Château prison; and I suppose that the King was at some pains in provisioning this ship. For I heard sickening stories of the food on other ships, and could not doubt them.

All that day I neither saw nor heard anything more of Gribouri. The girls on our deck were very miserable, save a dozen who remained gay and undisturbed. Two nuns out of three were sick; scarcely anybody ate dinner; and I suppose the sailors were glad of that and ate our dinner, which was better than their own.

About five o'clock I gave the marine soldier on guard a silver piece and a smile, and made my way forward to the galley where, from Gillasse, I bought a bottle of fine Burgundy and another of Port.

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He blew his charcoal to a glow; I made a beef broth and made it rich with Port.

As I was not yet accustomed to the plunging and rolling of the ship, Gillasse sent a little pastry lad with me to carry my earthen crock, and I took a napkin with *tartines* and a *brioche*, and we hastened to the deck where milord lay on his mattress.

The other four men were sitting forward playing cards. Milord still lay where I had left him, but he was not asleep, and turned his head when I seated myself beside him.

I wonder whether a mother bird feels such heavenly pleasure when she feeds her nestlings as I felt when milord rested his head upon my shoulder and I fed him.

I could have wept for happiness and pity, for it was plain to me that his chiefest sickness was starvation.

Even that first time I could see how the faint flush came to his cheeks when the generous wine warmed him. He was pleased to praise my broth, and asked me where I had learned to make it.

"Oh," said I, "our head farmer's wife taught me when I was a child and played at cottage life at Aulone."

"Aulone?"

"It is a château—like others in France."

"Your family's seat?"

"No longer, milord."

I did not know whether he believed me at all, or merely wondered how I had fallen from such estate to roam the Spring Gardens in russet gown. He asked no further questions; and I knew no way of making him believe me other than I had seemed to him or to anybody, on that fatal night in London.

When he had eaten, and I had set aside the dish, he

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thanked me, saying I was very kind to him who had done nothing to merit such attention.

"Did you not carry me out of England at peril to your head?"

He seemed vexed and shook that same head which might now have been a-sun-drying on a spike in London.

"Did you not starve in Dieppe prison so that I could buy life with your own gold, milord? And is it very strange that I brew for you a little pot of broth?"

He lay for a while gazing at the card players beyond us.

"And this gentleman—Gribouri?" he enquired carelessly, "—has he come to pay his respects to you?"

I would have given a thousand *livres* not to blush, but—Holy Mother!—my face was burning.

"No," said I, "he has not noticed me; and his presence aboard this ship, while it surprised me, is a matter of utter indifference to me, I assure you."

"Who is he?"

"I told you all I know—that he is a familiar of the King at Versailles."

"Have you been at Versailles, Michelle?"

"Yes."

"I suppose you knew this gentleman there," he said carelessly.

"Yes, sir, I did."

"It seems strange," said he, "if you have friends at court, that you do not appeal to them."

"Milord, did *you* appeal to your friends at Whitehall?"

"Oh! Have you, also, angered your King?"

"My—family has done so. Mortally."

"And yet—you were sent to Whitehall upon a mission."

I could make him no answer, which must involve my

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cousin whom I did not choose to expose to his austere opinions.

A kind of despair came over me that I never could explain myself to him. He could neither believe me nor ever understand such a woman as my cousin, or how such silly gaiety as ours was harmless. For God knows, even at Versailles, no breath of reproach ever had touched the Baroness d'Elven; and, concerning myself, I have been utterly honest with you as I promised.

Well, words were useless. Yet I knew that milord had become fond of me in spite of what I seemed to be; and, as for me, I was so in love that all that mattered was for me to care for him and serve him and win him back to strength and health.

And despite my chagrin that he should doubt me, yet somehow I felt that some day he must know all and believe in me. . . . And wondered if ever he might come to experience the same heavenly sentiments for me that now inspired me concerning him.

For a long while we remained silent; he lay with eyes closed. And after a while I drew his cloak over him and spread a blanket over that, for the air had become chilly.

Tucking the covers around him, my hand encountered his, and his fingers closed on mine and held them.

He said: "You are very kind to me, Michelle. Always I shall be happy to serve you."

"And I, you, sir."

"In my heart," he said, "you occupy a tender place."

"And you in mine, milord."

He seemed moved and I saw his gaunt face twitch.

A wild, senseless happiness began to awaken in me; and presently my heart caught the excitement and meddled with the rhythm of my breath. Yet I was certain that this Englishman never would marry any girl such

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as he must believe me to be—or to have been—even though he ever came to love me.

Because at Versailles all know that unmarried girls may commit indiscretions and yet find husbands; but in England they cannot; and this is the difference between these two courts.

Mary Mother!—that I should be chaste and he not believe it! And what would happen to us if he ever came to love me as I loved him?

As I sat there, and felt my melting palm burning within his hand, there came a sea-soldier down the ladder-stair and walked straight to where I sat.

“Are you Mademoiselle de Maniscamp?” he demanded.

A kind of terror seized me, and I got up.

“Yes, I am,” said I.

“Monsieur the Sub-Intendant desires to speak with you,” he said bluntly.

“I do not know any Sub-Intendant,” said I.

“Monsieur Gribouri has been named Sub-Intendant in New France,” said he. “Be good enough to follow me.”

CHAPTER XXVI

WHEN we arrived at the quarters of Monsieur Gribouri, instead of knocking the soldier scratched on the door as they do at Versailles; and I thought to myself that Monsieur Gribouri gave himself airs.

However, he received me with every ceremony and with all the politeness in the world, and led me to a very grand arm-chair which, I thought to myself, was more affectation. But I was as polite as he, and determined to let nothing frighten me.

"Mademoiselle de Maniscamp," said he, "I am agreeably astonished to find you aboard the *Duchess of Burgundy*."

"I am equally surprised that you should be aboard, Monsieur Gribouri."

"That," said he, "is not so astonishing, because his gracious Majesty has condescended to appoint me Sub-Intendant at Quebec, where Monsieur le Comte de Frontenac is again Royal Governor."

"Doubtless, Monsieur, that is very gratifying to you."

"It is, Mademoiselle, now that I learn you also are to be in Canada."

There was a pause; he looked at my peasant dress; I gazed about me at the gilded cabin with its crimson hangings, its fixed sofas done in red damask, its settees, table, desk, and a handsome bronze lamp swinging from the ceiling.

"Mademoiselle de Maniscamp," said he bluntly, "why are you in that habit?"

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"Because," said I, "the Ursuline nuns *requested* me to wear it."

"How, in God's name, did you come to be a prisoner in Dieppe!" he demanded.

"*Pardieu!* I had neglected the formality of papers to identify me, Monsieur."

After a few moments he said quietly: "You were not very polite to me in the garden of the Recollettes."

"Ah, Monsieur, I ask your pardon; but you left me no alternative. . . . I hope you recovered your horses and calèche."

He reddened.

"As for what happened in London," said I, "it was deplorable; but it was the fault of François de Frontenac and yourself."

His countenance became scarlet, and he muttered something about his foot slipping, and being unfortunate.

"I am very glad," said I, "to see that you are quite recovered from your—accident."

His black eyes narrowed; he said slowly and distinctly: "I beg to remind you that the grass was slippery. . . . As for Monsieur de Frontenac, he was drunk."

"I shall try to believe it, Monsieur. Otherwise, I remain at a loss to understand the affront he offered me." I looked up and stared him full in the eyes: "How came *you* there?" I asked.

"An accident. . . ."

"You seem subject to accidents, sir. You followed me to London. You saw me in the matted gallery. You ran to François de Frontenac; he carried you to the King; and the King carried you both to the Spring Gardens."

I saw his tongue wetting his thick red lips, and in his eyes was a stealthy look like a beast that fears to startle what it hunts.

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"Monsieur," said I, "in Versailles it was the King of France I fled from; not you! And, in London, again, it was a King from whom I fled; and never *you*! Therefore, what is it you wish of me now?"

He considered me for a while in silence. Then: "You are very blunt with me," he said, "and it is perhaps more polite that I take my tone from you. Therefore, without phrases, I love you and desire to possess you."

"You have already told me that."

"Yes; and shall tell you again and again and again."

"To what purpose?"

"To win you."

"Monsieur," said I, "this is a sorry suit you press. I would not listen to you before because I did not love you. I do not love you now. And never shall."

"Do you understand that it is of marriage I speak? That it is your hand I ask. . . ."

"*Tonnerre de Dieu, Monsieur!*" I flamed, "have you the impudence to meditate anything less? . . . And if this ship were the Palace at Versailles, and you the King—by the damned soul of Satan you should have had a shorter answer!"

"My God, Michelle. . . ." he burst out, "I offered you no such affront! I offer you all you have lost—fortune, position, power. . . ."

"Offer me nothing! I do not love you and am no prostitute though they jailed me for one in Dieppe! If my family is ruined at this hour it does not concern you. If I am destitute; if I go in prison garb; if I choose exile in a savage and unknown land, it is my affair; not yours."

He dropped his well-shaped head in his hands and sat so for a time. After a while he got up and began to pace the cabin in his lithe, graceful way, and I thought his lips

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moved and he was muttering to himself, but could not hear what he was saying.

He wearied me, yet I remained alert, because always, in this young man, I seemed conscious of hidden perils and knew not what to expect, nor when.

Now he stopped and advanced to the damask chair on which I sat, with both my hands gripping the gilded arms.

"That night in Versailles," he said, "you were not in love. But I could have made you love me."

To remember it angered me; but I looked him hardily in the eyes.

"That night you were not in love," he repeated. "But you are in love *now*!"

Fear silenced me; I merely stared at him.

"You are in love," he said; "do you deny it?"

"Be pleased to meddle with your own affairs, Monsieur. . . ."

"*This* is my affair!" he interrupted violently; "and I beg you will not force me to extremes. But if you do I shall not hesitate. By God; I shall not hesitate!"

"I do not understand. . . ." My voice sounded dead to me, but terror held me, and already I knew what threatened us—what menaced milord—for there was a devil looking at me out of this young man's eyes.

He said: "A word from me, and the man who slew young Frontenac hangs from the yardarm of this ship.

"One word from me to old Count Frontenac when we reach Quebec, and that English outlaw hangs from the great Rock.

"You know as well as I that he is an outlaw in France as he is in England. His head is forfeit to two Kings, both now at the Court of France."

All the world was crumbling into ruins around me—all was going, now, as the rest had gone—everything

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crashing in my brain, my ears, blurring my eyes, my senses. . . .

I sat straight up with my head held high and looked at him out of eyes that scarcely saw him.

He said: "I am striving to control myself. I—I have been patient with you, Michelle. God hears me; I have been patient who am hasty and swift to passion; and have endured. . . . Everything I was, or hoped to be, I risked for you. I flung my future at your feet.

"With the first glance you ever gave me—with the first word I ever heard you breathe—I loved you. Love—terrible, irresistible; instant, flaming, imperishable love! . . . God help me, it was none of my seeking—this passion, this anguish, this punishment that burns. . . ."

His voice broke; he covered his face with his hands, and I saw grief swelling in his throat and twisting his supple body like a soul in torment.

I looked at him without an atom of emotion. I neither pitied nor hated him. His grief broke on dull ears; out of dulled eyes I stared at him; and my dulled mind considered my own undoing.

For all was ended now. If there had been in me any self-hope at all—and now I knew there had been—that had died. It was dead.

He came toward me in a blind way, scarce seeing where he moved, and knelt down at my chair and laid his face against my knees.

My voice was dead, and its ghost spoke now: "Is that the price, Monsieur?"

"Have pity, Michelle. . . ."

"I ask you, is that the price?"

"I—must have you. Give me a chance to win you. . . ."

"No. But I am for sale."

"In God's name. . . ."

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"No! Not in His name this bargaining. I tell you I am for sale. Do you buy me, Monsieur?"

"With a life's slavery. . . ."

"Of no value. Bid higher. I am not worth what I ask, but you cannot buy me for less."

He rested his hot face and hotter hands upon my knees as though I were a *prie-dieu*; and, for all sensation, I might have been.

He said in a low, shamed voice: "You ask my word of honour. . . ."

"No, I do not! I do not deal in phrases. Shorten your words, Monsieur. Or I will clip them to suit me."

"You demand safety for your—outlaw," he murmured between his hands.

"Safe conduct to New York or Boston. That buys me. Nothing less."

His hands clenched on my knees and he straightened up and looked at me intently.

"Then he is your lover," he said.

"Alas!" I shook my head.

"You mean he is not?"

"I wish he had been," said I wearily. . . . "But I shall never have one, now."

"I shall teach you differently. . . ."

"Does he go free?" I demanded.

Monsieur Gribouri got up from his knees and I rose from my chair.

"That is my price," I said.

"You marry me when I pay it?"

"Yes."

"Until I pay will you be a little kind, Michelle?"

"I shall be polite and no more—if we chance to pass each other."

"Our voyage may take two months—and longer. . . ."

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"Permit me to observe, Monsieur, that there is a delicacy of feeling, which is customary among well-bred people, and a hesitation to intrude where dwells unhappiness. And it lodges with me and shares my pillow."

"You will not receive me?"

I laughed in my bitterness and asked him if he forgot what was my situation aboard this ship. He became very red and said that he'd soon take me out of such company. But I replied that I preferred to remain with my erring sisters. Also that I had a sick friend to nurse back to health in order that this same sick friend might be strong enough to travel when he landed.

"You love him, but I shall make you forget him," he said, his sombre, burning gaze on me. "You do not believe me, but I tell you I *know*! From the moment our lips met that night I knew I could make you love me. . . . So—I pay your price."

"When you pay, I pay," said I. "Until that reckoning, then. . . ."

I turned to the cabin door, groped blindly for it, my very soul in such a turmoil of rage and grief that it seemed as though it must rise and slay this man.

"Where is your damned servant to show me to my deck?" I demanded. "No, not you! I've a lifetime to endure with you!"

All my control was gone; I know not what I might have done to him had he come nearer. I think he saw in my eyes the hell that raged in mind and body, for he summoned a servant, and opened the gilded door for me, and stood aside.

Out into the battle-lantern's light I went like a lost soul's shadow; and how I came to my deck I know not, but found it at last, and all abed.

And so I lay me down to bitterness and tears.

CHAPTER XXVII

HAD I not been born a soldier's daughter, and from my father learned how to look Fear in his hollow eyes and face Fate with becoming courage, my heart, which naturally is somewhat valiant, must have failed me, and I never could have endured that voyage to the new world.

I told you that, in my breast, hope had died. But that is not true. Hope dies only with our last-drawn sigh.

That Count Frontenac would hang milord if ever he recognized and laid hands on him, I was very sure, because all agreed that Monsieur de Frontenac was a very violent man. It was whispered among the nuns that he foamed at the mouth when enraged; and God knows he must have done so when he learned that his only son had been slain during a brawl in a low and ignoble cabaret.

No; he would not spare the man who had killed him if Gribouri hinted that there had been foul play. Nor would the Governor of New France pay any attention to the word of such a witness as he might well suppose me to be.

Milord's life was in my hands. I could save him if I loved him. One does not hesitate when one loves. I did not even ask myself whether I loved him *enough*. There are no degrees in love. It is love or it is nothing.

And yet, I say to you that hope did not die. There were terrible hours—days of revolt, of horror, of despair. Hope survived. It is not to be slain in any living soul.

I will not say that I did not consider what remained to me to do when the supreme and evil crisis was upon me. There were ugly phantoms that scarce took shape in the darkness of my tortured mind. There was a spectre that lurked there. . . .

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Well, my father often told me that the first duty of a good soldier in battle was to forget himself and remember only what must be achieved. "Fearing God alone."

What was to be done was to win milord back to health. What was to be achieved was to avert the dreadful fate that menaced him.

As for myself, I must try not to think, but remember only that there was a price to pay, and that my honour was engaged to pay it.

During June we had fair weather but little wind; and lay becalmed for many days.

The second week we saw a Greenland whaler, *The Golden Hawk*, an Englishman, and stood for him—we carrying sixty guns; but he kept hedging away from us, and it was a miracle to see him tack and run and avoid us when there was scarce a thimbleful of wind.

We were vastly excited aboard, desiring that our ship should take so pretty a prize, and being in no fear of his three cannon and little swivels. But, alas! he hedged himself to the horizon, where, after a while, we saw only his topsails against the setting sun. The third week we saw a sloop which would not lower her flag to our signal gun; but she turned out to be a *chasse-marée* of our own, *La Belle Abbesse*, and was looking for an English brig, the *Eole*, with which she had been in action until night ended it.

July was a boisterous and windy month, but the winds were capricious and contrary, and beat us far out of our course to the southward. Here, becalmed, I never in all my life suffered from such heat; and at night we lay nearly naked upon our beds.

We saw, that month, an Englishman who first showed us the white flag of France and then gave us a shot. But

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he must have taken us for an Indiaman for when he got near enough we let him have all our larboard guns. Mary Mother!—what an earthquake was that which staggered us all; and I thought our hull had blown up and every soul aboard must presently see God.

Well, the Englishman ran; but it was like the other chase and we lost him in the edges of the swiftly falling night. Which mortified milord; but his chagrin was senseless and like a sulky boy's, because she was but a little thing and we a tall ship of many guns. But it vexed him so that he would not speak to me for days.

Milord was nearly well, and had his strength again in such degree that all day long he was a-walking of his narrow deck, or, with his fellow prisoners, playing at single-stick, or, stripped to the waist, wrestling or at bowls.

His had become a supple body now; all limber steel in a white and silken sheath—so fine and white his skin seemed even to me who have that snowy colouring which is the fellow of red hair.

And all this time Gribouri came not near him, nor, as far as I discovered, never approached that deck. But lately some of the young French officers came curiously to inspect the Englishman who had volunteered out of prison. Somehow the rumour got abroad that milord was very mighty with the sword, and for that reason had been pardoned some grave offense.

Well, our young men are not slow to tickle points; and during the first week in August there was much fencing with buttoned rapiers.

I was jealous for my countrymen, but more jealous for milord; and though I never was permitted there when men were exercising, yet I heard from the forecastle and

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the guards that milord had forced them all to respect his blade, and that always he bore himself both amiably and gallantly and won respect.

During all these weeks, in storm or calm, I never failed to carry to milord his broth and wine and bread. Of our stores I made such little sugared dishes as I thought might please him; all my invention and skill I exercised with such salted meats and fish as we had. Or, when a beef was killed, or a fowl, I saved my share and he and I supped together.

As I have told you, three poor nuns could not control us; and it would have required the mother-house and every Ursuline convent in the world to have prevented me from caring for milord.

That, upon an open deck, and with a sentry at the stair above, I could not get into any mischief with this man, did not save my reputation. Representations were made to me by Sister Agnes-Rose—awful warnings were uttered, prayers, admonitions, exhortations: I ran to the forecastle nevertheless and sometimes remained with him until the sentry warned me in the moonlight.

I loved; and had but a little while to look and love and sometimes touch. Who had authority, or sufficient cruelty, to forbid me these last brief hours? They might tear my honour to shreds with their tongues; they could not tear me from him. Oh, Holy Mary! I was like some mother in the agony of her mournful pride, who breeds an only son to arms, knowing he will leave her—who gives him all of her—equips him with strength and health, tasting already the glory and the anguish of his going.

He never guesses what it costs. Nor should this man ever know, please God.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THERE was a sunset sky in August when all the heavens and the ocean made but one vast vault of yellow light, and we seemed to be a-sailing straight into God's own glory.

Up over the world's edge floated a magic moon as golden-full as a pompion.

That day the sailors said they had seen a bird—not one of those storm-sprites ever hovering under the glassy crests of waves, but a great sea bird sailing high over a patch of drowned weeds.

Also, it seemed to me that, in the west wind, I could scent afar and faintly that new world to which we were addressed—some slightest altered flavour in the air there was—or so I thought.

On that day, early in the morning, we had passed our fleet out of Canada, which sails twice every year in spring and in autumn; and had spoke a frigate, *La Couronne*, who asked, and gave us, news.

Thus we learned that war had begun in the new world, between Canada and New England; that the French had burned two English towns called Schenectady and Salmon Falls; had taken the English fortress of Pemaquid; and that old Count Frontenac, with his fleet was already afloat in St. Lawrence Gulf to invade all New England and cut the Puritan head from the Dutch neck at Albany and the Dutch body in New York.

All the vessels of the Canada fleet bound for France showed us all their flags to confirm the victories of our arms; and we showed them ours; and gave them back gun for gun, answering the faint cheering that came across

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the waves—"Vive la France! Vive le Roi! Vive Frontenac!"

That sunset evening I sat on the deck beside milord upon his mattress, clasping my knees between my arms and gazing into the flaming eye of the West.

We had supped; the generous Burgundy had restored us both, for the moment, from the sloth and long ennui of many idle weeks.

He was in a humour of his own which sometimes possessed him, to rally me, and make a jest of everything; which was a kind of gentle intimacy grown up between us, though often disguised with gayest mockery. And often he begged of me to save my King the cost of lighting the great bronze war-lamp on the quarter-deck, and sit there myself and let my red hair illuminate the night.

Said I: "What would you have my hair, milord?"

"Green," said he, "like other sirens of the seas; and a fish's tail instead of those two pretty, slender feet that tap-tap while you talk to me."

"I tap my shoes to time my thoughts. Like the gay French drum-beats that marched the English out of Pemaquid."

"Oho," said he, "Monsieur de Frontenac's drums play one tune and ours another!"

"Yes, a parley," said I demurely.

He laughed. "Taken," said he; "and I salute you and beg leave to pick up my sword."

"You must dive for it, then."

"Why, how?"

"Ah, milord, you should ask Jean Bart that!"

"Lord," said he, still laughing, "I have taken your point too many times to carry hardily. Be pleased, Michelle, to give me quarters."

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"Yes, sir, a *billet-de-logement* in my heart."

"Ah," said he gaily, "I give you more, for your barracks are builded within my breast."

"Generous quarters," said I, "and snug . . . until the barrack-master cleans house for the new comers."

"No; for you remain the body-guard. You are my Black Musketeer, Michelle. None can displace you."

"Must I then call you Sire and Majesty, milord?"

He looked at me in a bantering way: "Why do you call me milord who am not a lord but a baronet of the British realm?"

"Milord means—all things to me," said I lightly.

Now like an immense bubble we saw the moon floating above the sea, and the spell seemed to still our gaiety.

Milord took the bottle and filled our two cups, and there was no water to temper mine, to which indulgence I am not accustomed.

"To the two great peoples of the earth," said he, "—from which we sprang."

"And which hath cast us out. Nevertheless. . . ."

I lifted my cup and tasted it.

"Why," said he, "should a third great race not spring from the new world?"

"Milord, great races spring only from a beloved soil."

"The land that cradled them. Yes. But—there are children already born in the new world. And, of these, many, many yet to be given birth. English and French and Dutch children. And many of these shall intermarry and found a race such as was founded in France and in England."

I said nothing, and, for a moment, the rush of bitterness poisoned me who knew that, in the founding of any race, I should have no part but remain sterile. . . . There

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is no punishment like this, that a barren woman must stand aside and gaze at mothers.

"You are silent," he said.

"Yes, milord."

"The moon's splendour and the beauty of the sea hold me, also. . . . It is a wondrous world."

I looked up at the sky. The moon's lustre had flooded out the stars.

I know not why I folded my hands and recited in English:

"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth or the world, even from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God."

After a silence: "Then you are Huguenot, Michelle."

"I know not. We had an English Bible. . . . Why should the beauties of God's word be covered with the dust of Greece and Rome?"

"I have wondered, too," he said simply.

I was minded to talk with him concerning the reformed faith, but, looking cautiously about in the moonlight, noticed the sentry at the stairs above and the four other prisoners seated about a forward gun-carriage and playing cards by moonshine.

Yet, never before had I felt myself so near to God or to milord; and meant no coquetry when I laid my hand on his where it rested on the deck.

For a long while his hand never stirred; then he moved it, turned in the moonlight, and took me into his arms.

"Milord," said I, amazed, "have a care what you are about. . . ."

"Yes," said he, "I have had a care for many, many days. . . . Only to learn each day anew what I had known so long ago. . . . That you are very dear to me, Michelle."

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Gently I unwound his arms from my body, and took both his hands between mine.

Thus we sat in silence for a little while, and my heart so loud that I felt he must hear its beating.

Oh, Mary Mother, I knew what was in this young man's mind . . . though how I had such knowledge I can not say. But in my own breast I felt the struggle in his—the grim conflict between his pride of race, which dared not mis-ally itself; and his heart which held a wondrous tenderness for me.

I should have spoken then—broken the golden moment into a million fragments that none ever could mend or reunite.

But my heart beat so—and mind and body trembled for him—so desperately I loved him. . . .

Mary Mother, I would have gone all my life in rags for leave to follow him—to touch his sleeve as I groped my way through life. He should have had me churched or un-churched—for what choice had I who from the first was his! For I had always known it that I was his no matter what he might do with me, or leave undone.

And now, if he spoke—and I knew he would!—all I could give him was his own life. Not mine. Nothing of me that he might desire. Nothing except these last few days at sea. And that ended me.

Now, in a blissful terror I saw his head bend to my hands clasping his; and felt the heaven of his lips. . . . Now he looked into my eyes through which my soul cried out to him in gratitude, yet begged God's mercy on us both.

He said: "Do you know that I love you, and am deep in love, Michelle?"

"Milord," said a still voice that was unlike mine, "what-

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ever it pleases you to think of me, I have been chaste, and shall remain blameless."

"I have not asked you that. . . ."

"Milord, your austere mind has asked your heart that question till both are sick on it, I know. I know, too, how all the finer has been your condescension to this friendship. . . . For that is what it means—friendship—no more, no less. . . ."

"It means I love you."

"Ah, Monsieur, you are confusing kindness with passion. . . ."

"Do you suppose I desire you as a mistress?"

"Oh, Mary Mother, either that or the other must be born of inclination, sir."

"You mean you do not love me?"

Desperately I clung to my father's warning that one's self mattered nothing, but only the achievement. I was engaged in battle to give this young man his life. Blindly I gave it; and took a mortal wound:

"Milord," I said, "I could love you neither as your mistress or your wife. But I can love you as a grateful friend, and ever must until I die."

After a long while: "Well, I am answered," said he. There was a fierceness in his voice but his hands crushed mine so that the pain made me faint—yet there was ecstasy in it.

"Well," said he, "and thus it ends. . . . I know nothing how to court a woman. . . . But would be at pains to learn if, maybe, you might incline to listen—or teach me how to win you. . . ."

"Milord, long since you have won of me all I have to give you."

"Cold friendship."

"It is very warm, sir. . . ."

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"Thank you."

He nodded his head slowly as though communing with a secret self which was interposing admonitions.

"I am to understand," said he, "that you desire me to be at no pains to win you for my wife."

Through the wild triumph in my brain swept a confused darkness that overwhelmed and left me swaying, so that I thought to fall forward on my face.

It passed. And, when my voice returned to me: "Milord," I said, "I have no gift to give you in return for the so great honour offered—excepting friendship. And, if that be too contemptible a gift, then, milord, I have lost you, and must live forever unconsolated."

"It is I who must live on unconsolated," he said in a low voice.

But I was past all words, now—beyond all further strength.

A little while I sat to rest me and gain firmness to stand and go my way again.

And so, at last, I rose, bade him good night, and went my way through the honey-lustre of the moon.

CHAPTER XXIX

OFF from Nova Scotia, out of a gale of rain, a pilot hailed us and came aboard; also a Sulpitian father who, they told me, carried a commission as Governor of Montreal for Monsieur Gribouri.

For days, now, we sailed slowly westward through the great gulf of the St. Lawrence and up that gigantic river; and at last were approaching Quebec, they said. But nowhere did we encounter the battle fleet of Monsieur de Frontenac.

Sometimes I saw Monsieur Gribouri. He seemed to have grown heavier and more sluggish during these three months at sea; and he bore himself less upright. Always he saluted me with every mark of courtesy, and stood for me to pass; but I could see his flushed features darken to a muddy red and knew that his self control, in these last days, was weakening every hour.

One vital object, one paramount fulfillment, seemed to so possess me, and close my eyes and deafen my ears to all else, that I scarcely noticed him; or even the new world when first I beheld it; and saw it only as in a strange and distorted dream—the great cliffs and mountains and the endless sea of trees.

We passed a few fishing vessels and canoes in the upper waters of the river, where green shores were nearer, and where little whitewashed houses could be seen; even people on the strand, and cattle in pasture.

But my arrival in the new world now meant but one thing to me—sanctuary for the man I loved above all else on earth.

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The day that we were informed that Quebec was very near, I went to Monsieur Gribouri in his cabin; and there I coldly complimented him upon his new Governorship, and then I asked him how it was to be arranged that milord should be released, and how he was to gain the English colonies.

It became plain to me that Gribouri's patience had reached the breaking point; though he was sullenly polite to me; and I began to realize how hotly his rage had smouldered and how deeply it had burned into his pride.

That ageing weariness which comes of jealous brooding and patient anger cherished day and night visibly marked this young man's features, and had altered and aged them; and I wondered fearfully that he had endured a situation so galling to him, where the object of his hatred must presently escape; and the object of his desire must forever hold him in contempt.

But what this man was suffering was not a drop in the sea to what I suffered, and must endure till the end of all things. And upon this dangerous man's patience depended what the remainder of my life should be and when that life must end.

"Monsieur," said I, "your high office in your new government of Montreal should authorize you to send this English gentleman away in secrecy and safety, and without the knowledge of Monsieur de Frontenac."

"Whenever you choose," said he carelessly, "I will tell this gentleman that traitors are not welcome in New France, and so pack him off about his business."

I smiled; for I could see milord take Gribouri by the throat at any slightest insolence from him; and I told him sharply that this was not the way to carry out our bargain.

"Write me an order," said I, "releasing this Englishman

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from his voluntary engagement. For," said I, "he is peculiar in that he is a man of scrupulous honour—unlike many in these days of Scarronades and dragonnades—and he is like to regard his parole as sacred."

"Is the gentleman's honour so exquisitely sensitive that he would not take to his heels if warned that his life is in danger?" asked Gribouri with a sneer that twitched his whole face.

"Is common honesty so difficult a virtue for you to comprehend, Monsieur?"

"No," said he, "I am still child enough to like nursery tales. . . ."

"But what, then, is your idea, Mademoiselle—a release from parole and a safe-conduct? And shall I send your Englishman with a flag to the Boston Puritan, Phips?"

His brutal duplicity and his contempt of my experience and intelligence disgusted me.

"Doubtless," said I, "you are fully aware that to ask a flag of Monsieur de Frontenac would ruin this Englishman. Come, sir, are you loyal or disloyal to your agreement with me?"

"He shall depart in any manner you desire," said Gribouri sullenly.

"Then cancel his parole and write me a discharge and safe-conduct. I will carry his papers to him and inform him that he has been recognized aboard this ship, and that, through influence of friends, his parole is cancelled and he is offered an opportunity to escape."

"Shall you tell your Englishman anything concerning the compact between you and me, Michelle?" he enquired maliciously.

"No."

"Why not?"

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"Because my Englishman would never stir to save himself until he first had called you to account!"

"I had rather it happened that way—"

"It shall not! And I am obliged to tell you, Monsieur, that there is every appearance of disloyalty in what you suggest. His life depends on secrecy. You know it. Why do you suppose I do so abominable a thing as I must do except to give this Englishman a lease of life among his own people? Be pleased, sir, to conduct this matter with honourable discretion."

He laughed—not at me—but at something cruel which was in his mind, I think. Then, looking at me, he assured me that he was at my service.

"Very well. Be pleased to write for me these necessary orders," said I.

So he went to his gilded table and wrote while I waited, refusing to be seated in his cabin which seemed to suffocate me. When he had written and sanded his papers, he rose and handed them to me, and watched me in silence whilst I read every word.

"You cry up loyalty," said he, "and carry it all very mightily with me; and I am beginning to wonder how loyal you will prove to be when your beloved Englishman is out of our net and winging southward to his brother heretics and their Iroquois."

"No," said I, "you are not wondering, Monsieur Gri-bouri. Because the daughter of a gentleman who braved his King in behalf of his conscience and his honour is not likely to tarnish hers—even to save herself from you."

He stood licking his thick, dry lips and his black eyes intent on me.

"For all I have endured from you," he began slowly, "I shall be recompensed in that hour when, despite your

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rebellious mind, your warm lips and heart *once more* incline to my embrace. . . . Because *I* know you, Michelle, and the hot passions asleep within you. And for that reason I bide my hour."

The thought so sickened me that I averted my face and fumbled for the door knob. However, he opened the cabin door for me and bowed me out with every ceremony and politeness; and I went away in the sunshine, clutching milord's papers to my breast.

While I had been detained with Monsieur Gribouri, we had cast anchor; but the City of Quebec was not yet in sight. However, presently we noticed a canoe approaching across the sunlit waters; and I heard the sailors saying that it carried an officer with despatches from the Governor for Monsieur Gribouri.

Always in deadly dread of some treachery unforeseen, I went to the open port and looked down at the canoe which now lay rocking on the water at the foot of the accommodation stairs; and so close to the port from which I leaned out that I could almost touch the men in it.

I saw the officer in his brilliant uniform of the Carignan-Salières Regiment—now disbanded—climb nimbly up the stairs, followed by a soldier carrying a portfolio.

Now, in the canoe, I saw two strange looking men dressed in soft leather and belted with girdles made of many coloured beads. It was they who had paddled the canoe. One sat in the stern, smoking a clay pipe and staring up at the high deck above me. The other sat in the bow of the canoe, and had laid hold of the rope rail on the stairway.

He was a big, loose jointed, overgrown boy with a cherub face and two innocent blue eyes under the furry cap he wore. Scarlet fringes fell from the seams of his

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soft leather smock and hose which were gay with brilliant designs in coloured beads.

I was so near that I could have laid my hand upon his curly yellow hair which was shorn to his neck and clustered there in pretty ringlets.

I know not what strange tenderness moved me to extend my fingers and lightly touch the soft fur on his cap—so young he seemed, and made me think of our little drummer boy in the Régiment d'Aulone.

As I moved my hand he looked up. For an instant my smiling eyes met his; and then—oh, God!—he spoke my name; and the next instant had caught my fingers and was a-kissing them and crushing them to his cheeks and to his eyes from which tears fell hot and silent.

“Colin!” I whispered. “Oh, little Colin, is it thou here in the new world!”

“Oh, Mademoiselle de Maniscamp,” he whispered, “how is it you have come here where all know of the ruin which has fallen upon Monsieur le Comte your father?”

“Look upon me, Colin! Look at my wool habit! Two years in the Fortress prison of Dieppe! And today on parole, and a volunteer for this colony of New France.”

He pressed his face to my hand and wept silently. Presently he looked up.

“Did Mademoiselle know that Monsieur d'Aulone is here?”

“Colin!” I gasped, “what is it you say to me!”

“That Monsieur your father is here in Canada. . . .”

“Where?”

“God knows. He is turned coureur-de-bois. . . .”

“What is that!”

“A forest runner who trades as he chooses, despite the King and the Governor. There are many in the woods—all outlaws—and our King hath ordered Monsieur de

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Frontenac to kill every one. Oh, Mademoiselle. . . .” His tears fell again upon my hand, but I caught his rough fingers and held desperately to them.

“Colin,” said I, “can you carry news of me to my father?”

“Yes,” he said, “for I am of the canoe service of Monsieur de Champigny, and often am sent to carry officers above Three Rivers.”

“I do not understand what you are telling me,” said I, “but if you can acquaint my father that I am here I shall pray for you all my life, dear Colin.”

“Where?” he asked, wiping his eyes on his fringed sleeves.

“We are to be sheltered at the Ursulines’—wherever that may be.”

“At Quebec. I know. I shall find means of sending word to Monsieur le Comte d’Aulone if it cost me my head. All forest folk, white or red alike, know him. He is the real leader of the *coureurs-de-bois*, and for his head our King will pay ten thousand livres in gold. . . .”

“Oh, Mary Mother,” said I, “what is it you are telling me?”

“Why, all know it here. Yet not one man in New France has lifted a finger to betray or take Monsieur d’Aulone. Even our Governor, they say, has a soft heart toward the *coureurs-de-bois*—I know not why, for they do him the same damage in the fur trade that they do the Jesuits and the Intendant and all who profit secretly at Montreal and Quebec. Yet Monsieur de Frontenac will not clear the forests of the *coureurs-de-bois*. Maybe he can not.”

“Are they robbers?” I demanded incredulously.

“No, Mademoiselle; they are only free folk who live and trade where they please, and who do not believe

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that the King of France owns everything on earth, or that they must buy of Monsieur de Frontenac the right to live."

"Is my father well, Colin?"

"I do not know to the contrary."

"And our regiment?"

"Why," said he, "the Régiment d'Aulone is here!"

With all the wild happiness and fears which had so suddenly overwhelmed me, this news brought tears to my eyes. I begged him to tell me all he knew about our old regiment.

He explained that the regiment had arrived in Quebec nearly two years ago; that, unlike the Regiment Carignan-Salières, ours had not been disbanded excepting for the two companies of d'Aurac and de Moidrey; and that, since the awful Iroquois massacre at La Chine they were in garrison at Quebec and the fortified posts above.

"Mademoiselle," said the boy, "I am on my knees to serve you. I no longer beat the drum in our Regiment. I till the land and am in the canoe service also. Do you know that Nicole is here and that we are married, and live in a little house in the lower town, and have a cow and a calf, three pigs, nine hens, and. . . ."

But I had broken down and I laid my head in my arms and wept to hear him tell me that my father and my foster-sister—my dear Nicole—were here with me in this unknown land.

Well, presently there came a stir and bustle on the deck above us; it was the officer returning to the canoe.

Colin cast a heartbroken look at me; I leaned down from the open port and took his face between my hands and kissed him on both cheeks.

"Tell Nicole I love her. Do what is possible to acquaint

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my father with my situation. . . . God go with you, dear Colin."

I saw him take up his paddle and, trailing it in one hand, clear the tears from his eyes with his great, sun-burned fist.

As long as the canoe was in view I stood watching it. Already we had weighed anchor and were standing up the river under a strong breeze.

After the canoe had disappeared, I placed milord's papers in my bosom and turned wearily away to face whatever this last day might bring forth of grief or consolation.

When, about dusk, I brought our supper to milord, I discovered him pacing the narrow deck with a stern and troubled mien; but he came toward me with perfect kindness and took from me the wooden tray I carried.

It was to be the last meal that ever I should prepare for this man. The last ever that we should share together.

We scarcely spoke, even drinking our red wine with scarce a compliment.

After we had eaten he offered his hand, and we walked together in the starlight, long in utter silence.

It was becoming almost more than I could endure, all this false mockery—this crucifixion of my shrinking soul. I must make an end lest, in sudden weakness, I do a mortal harm to him: lest, in a moment's agony, a single word escape me. . . .

"Milord," said I, "tomorrow we land. . . . I have a gift for you; and a last word; and shall come hither to deliver both."

He thanked me courteously and kindly; but there was that in his voice that was breaking my heart.

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"Good-bye till then," I said.

He bent over my hand in silence ; and I went away with the light touch of his lips upon my fingers, and the heavenly hurt of it tearing my quivering heart to shreds.

CHAPTER XXX

I KNOW not what evil magic, working through that last restless night of tears and fearful dreams, made of me a kind of devil.

For when I went on deck there was a new and reckless wickedness in me as though grief had hardened me; and I meant to make an end of all these tortures.

I looked out over the water and saw a great rock against the sky; and upon it perched a city; and a strand at its base where were more houses.

Boats plied about us where we lay under the black cliff; the nuns marshalled us for our landing. But I set my little bundle upon the deck and, paying no attention to Sister Agnes-Rose, ran to find milord; and discovered him standing alone at the foot of the ladder-stairs.

God forgive me for the tragedy in his dear eyes as he took my hands and held them between his.

But I dared lose no time with this man, and drew my hands from his and gave him his three papers—a release from parole, a safe-conduct, and an order for transportation by canoe service to the River Richelieu, and by that waterway to Lake Champlain, and so through Lake George to within sight of the nearest English post.

The poor boy stared at the papers and at me as though I had gone mad.

Then I told him that there were those aboard who had recognized him and would denounce him; and that Monsieur de Frontenac would surely hang him, nor ever believe—what with the false testimony to be offered

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against him—that the young Vicomte, his only son, had not been foully dealt with.

I saw the blood rush to milord's face; he glared at me; then he cast his indignant glance upon these papers, all signed, "Gribouri, Royal Sub-Intendant and Governor of Montreal."

"Oh," said he, "so that's what this man is! . . . And—what is he to *you*, Michelle?"

"The man to whom I am affianced, milord."

Never have I seen such astonishment and rage in a man's eyes. It blazed but an instant, then something quenched it; and his eyes grew bleak and cold as ice.

He thanked me, coldly, for warning him of his peril and so saving him from a shameful death, and asked me if he might not express his thanks in person to the gentleman who had been so generous and gallant as to have given him this chance for life.

Panic seized me, but I controlled my fright and told him that any interview would compromise Monsieur Gribouri who, knowing milord guiltless, was anxious that he escape before Monsieur de Frontenac could hear the false evidence against him.

"Will not Monsieur Gribouri testify that I slew Monsieur the Vicomte de Frontenac fairly?" he demanded.

"Monsieur Gribouri's presence here is unwelcome to the Governor who hates Champigny and all Intendants and local Governors, and who is the enemy of the Fathers of St. Sulpice as well as of the Jesuits," I said.

"Very well," said milord calmly; "I beg you to present my gratitude and respect to Monsieur the Governor of Montreal, and say to him that always I shall bear testimony to his chivalry, loyalty, and generosity."

Then he looked into my eyes, smiling—God gave him more courage than He gave to me—and, in his pleasant,

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winning manner, he took his leave of me, thanking me for kindnesses, expressing gratitude for our friendship, and wishing me all blessings upon my marriage with the gentleman of my choice.

He kissed my hand with perfect courtesy; took me to the ladder-stairs which, he explained, he was forbidden to mount, and so parted from me.

All about me, now, was the hurry and tumult of disembarking; soldiers and sailors running this way and that; officers giving orders; nuns herding their excited charges into two files to await the boats which now were swarming around the accommodation stairs.

I was crossing the main deck toward the ladder which led to the deck where the nuns and their charges were gathered, when I saw Monsieur Gribouri in a glittering uniform, coming toward me to salute me, which he did with every politeness imaginable.

Then he said in a low voice that I was to go to his cabin where proper clothing awaited me and a servant-maid to attend me, and that he himself would carry me ashore in the Intendant's barge which already was on its way from the Palace.

I laughed at him and said: "No, I shall go dressed as I am so that the good people of Quebec may see what kind of woman the Governor of Montreal means to marry."

He reddened as though I had struck him.

"You will dress as I wish, Michelle. Do you understand?"

"I shall do as I wish in everything, both now and after I marry you, Monsieur," said I, amused; and left him standing where he was.

So I took my place at the head of the file beside Sister

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Agnes-Rose, and listened to what she was saying to the girls—that, upon landing, we were to march to the Convent of the Ursulines, and there await further orders from the Bishop and the Intendant who could not finally dispose of us until Monsieur de Frontenac, the Governor General, either returned or sent some word from Montreal where he now was.

We waited and waited. Boats came to the ship and went away loaded. Finally we were told it was our turn; and we moved forward amid laughter and giggling and an intense excitement among the crew and marine guard, who had made many clandestine friendships among these gray-clad girls to the scandal of our poor, distracted nuns.

I was in the leading boat with Sister Agnes-Rose; and so landed first at the water-stairs, where was a vast crowd of people as noisy and excited as were we; and who instantly began to greet us and exchange pleasantries and gay jests with us. All of which harmless badinage further excited and delighted our girls who seemed inclined to go mad with happiness upon touching the solid earth again; and would very recklessly have thrown themselves into the arms of the first young man who opened his to them.

Now, through the crowds we marched in two files, herded by the anxious nuns; up a steep rocky way which ascended the cliffs above us, and came, at length, into the upper city where more crowds were assembled to gaze at us.

And there, as we were halted to receive a dozen Ursuline Sisters from the Quebec Convent, who now arrived to conduct us thither, my ears caught the rattle of drums and the measured tread of regular troops.

And then, oh, Mary Mother! I saw white uniforms faced with violet, rank after rank passing through the

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street beyond us with guns aslant and glancing, and the drummer lads ahead beating a gay march upon the painted drums I knew so well!—our own beloved drums of the Regiment of Aulone.

I stood watching, the tears almost blinding me so that the long ranks of white uniforms were scarce more than a glimmer in my eyes.

Tramp, tramp, tramp!—and the drums, now, far away; then an officer riding; then a file of men; a silvery glimmer.

The Regiment had passed.

CHAPTER XXXI

THERE was not room for us all at the Ursulines'. Their large convent and the dependent structures, which had suffered by fire a few years before, had not been entirely, or even sufficiently, rebuilt to accommodate us all.

However, they fed us; and we sat in the long refectory with the flaming glow of sunset in our eyes, and saw through the tall windows a sky of fire as though the darkening western world were all ablaze.

The solid earth, absence of all motion, the stillness after that interminable rocking and rolling swash of breaking waves, made many of us dizzy, and all restless. Our excitement and high spirits of the morning had been subdued by noon and nearly quenched by sunset.

Also we learned that we were not to enter into our longed-for liberty at once. No, not by any means. We were to remain under priestly surveillance and the religious discipline of nuns for a while.

As to our ultimate disposal, everybody seemed to have a finger in it—the Vicar General, the Council, the Intendant, and, particularly, the Jesuits. But, until the return of the Governor General from Montreal, nothing was to be done with us except to house us, discipline us, and instruct us.

Another thing we learned almost as soon as we had landed; and at the Ursulines', this was made plain to us—that all Canada stood in instant dread of the English and the Iroquois; and that, if they came, our fiery Governor would defend Quebec to the last.

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That night, while I knelt beside my cot, the evening hymn of the Ursulines floated up from their chapel, sweetly, sadly, through our open windows, mingled with the perfume of the pines:

*Soutenez, grande Reine,
Notre pauvre pays!
Il est votre domaine,
Faites fleurir nos lis!
L'Anglais sur nos frontières
Porte ses étandards,
Exaucez nos prières,
Protégez nos remparts!—*

I bowed my head and prayed for the man I loved wherever he might be. And if my prayer were Catholic or Huguenot I neither knew nor cared; I told my rosary; I prayed to our Mother Mary; I recited in English, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place"; and then, listening, my soul joined silently in the sad hymn of these lonely, anxious nuns:

*Aid, Heavenly Queen,
Our poor country
Whose snowy lilies mean
Homage to Thee!
The English shake our Gate,
Their Flag draws nigh!
Oh, shield us from their Hate,
Dear Virgin of the Sky!*

The hymn ended. The lights in the chapel went out. Naked in my shift I crept to the open window to smell the pines; and saw battle lanterns gleaming along the

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ramparts and distant lights in the vast buildings of the Seminary.

From somewhere among dark trees in the garden of the Ursulines some strange night-bird repeated its sad, interminable refrain of eleven minor notes; and it seemed as though it were the haunting voice of the wilderness itself, heeded by the high stars alone.

I slept, balanced and cradled by vague waves tossing through my dreams. Twice I awoke, dreaming of milord, my cheeks wet with tears.

The third time, the convent bells were ringing for prayers; and, before we were gathered in the chapel, the drums of the fortress were beating the dawn of another day—my first sunrise since I had landed in the western world.

We had breakfasted; cleaned our dormitory and made our beds; had been inspected by the Mother Superior; had been told off into squads for religious questioning and instruction; and now we were preparing to sew upon and mend such clothing as required attention, when a nun came to seek me with orders to wait upon our Mother Superior.

She was in her oratory; but came out and spoke very kindly to me, saying that other plans seemed to have been made for my disposal by the Government of Montreal, and that there was an officer of that Government at the gate waiting to conduct me elsewhere.

There was nothing for me but to obey. I went back to my little bed, made a bundle of what belonged to me, took leave of Sister Agnes-Rose and of such comrades as were there, and went out through the cloister and across the garden to the outer gate where an officer stood, but of what regiment I could not tell by his gray uniform faced with green and gold.

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He was young, polite, inclined to gallantry, and enormously amused to conduct a girl from a reformatory through Quebec streets.

But there appeared to be very few people in the streets of the upper city, other than priests, monks, Jesuits—Seminarists, nuns, and soldiers—both regulars and militia.

Because the city on the summit of the gigantic rock, called Diamond, is but a vast fortress flanked with cloisters.

It is in the streets of the lower town, built under the Rock, along the river, that one finds the real city of shops and stores and markets and warehouses and dwellings.

But on top of the Rock are few shops and dwellings, and only one or two taverns; but everywhere are bastions, ramparts, cannon, barracks, churches, the great Seminary of the Jesuits, the Ursulines, and the Château St. Louis where dwells Monsieur de Frontenac when at home. It is a long, low, meanly designed palace linked with stables and other rambling buildings which make a kind of quadrangle with the fortifications. And, somehow, it impressed me as the palace of Whitehall had disappointed me—that it was dingy and flimsy and unworthy to house the deputy of the greatest of all earthly monarchs.

My pretty lieutenant who conducted me was a great wag-tongue, and he very soon let me know that he was equerry to the new Governor of Montreal, that he was lieutenant of a *côte* militia regiment in that parish, and heir to the Seigneurie of Beau Rivage—in fact, that he was a devil of a fellow, and that both the English and the Iroquois had heard of him.

“Ah, Mademoiselle,” said he, “if Denonville had only taken my advice on that ghastly night at La Chine! Be-

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cause I was of one mind with Subercase; and Vaudreuil never had turned *me* back, orders or no orders!"

I did not know what he meant, and asked him, and was horrified to hear of that awful massacre, and the tragedy of the forts; and could scarcely believe that the blackened ruins of those villages still stretched along the river for miles, even to the very gates of Montreal.

Mary Mother, I had indeed come into a savage land where savages raged to the cities' gates and slew and ravaged and tortured even women and little children at the fiery stake.

Yet it seems strange that I did not also remember the dragonnades and the prisons of France; the swift tyranny of kings; the torture of the boot, the whip, the question, the solitary cell.

We came, now, to a small convent which, to my surprise, he told me was the cloister of the Recollettes—all that now remained in Canada—which, in earlier days, had been an important order. But now the Ursulines ruled everything in alliance and understanding with the Jesuits who, in their turn, had become far more powerful than the Fathers of St. Sulpice—the real seigniors of Montreal.

"It is because of the Sulpitians' friendship for their newly chosen Governor, Monsieur de Gribouri," explained my gossiping lieutenant, "that it is desirable for you to live here among the Recollette Sisters."

I was glad. I loved the Recollettes. Even these few distant Sisters so far removed from the Mother house must know what their order owed to the Counts of Aulone.

We rang the little garden bell and were admitted. My talkative lieutenant kissed my hand; a nun came to welcome me; and once again I found myself in sanctuary

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among the Recollettes where refuge was a right inherited by every woman of my race.

How strange and sad! For even in this new world my father was a fugitive, and I once more confronted by the menace of Gribouri. But this time there was to be no escape for me.

There were not more than a dozen nuns, and no Sister bound by perpetual vows to head them, but a Lady Superior, Madame d'Aloste, who had aided Marguerite Bourgeoys and Madame Bourdon in earlier days.

Here at the Recollettes I found a wonderful retreat. I had a sunny chamber, a soft bed, pretty curtains, an arm-chair, a fireplace and a great yellow cat to keep me in amiable company, and a yellow bird from the Canary Islands to sing and sing in the August sunshine.

I discovered at once that the Lady Superior knew all about me and about my father. She was both gentle and kind; and from her I learned that all was not well between the hot-tempered Governor, Monsieur de Frontenac, on one side, and the Sulpitians and Recollettes on the other.

In fact, it seemed to me that the peppery Count was in a rage with everybody—Jesuits, Ursulines, Sulpitians, Recollettes, the Intendant Champigny, the Council—not to mention the English and the Iroquois, or the vagabond coureurs-de-bois.

He swore that every ecclesiastic in Canada was attempting to undermine his authority, and that he'd teach them, the Bishop, and the Intendant who was ruler in New France.

He swore at the Council, at Monsieur de Champigny, at the Seminarists; he vowed he would hunt down the coureurs-de-bois and kill every one; and notably their chief, the Comte d'Aulone.

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But when Madame d'Aloste told me this she smiled faintly:

"Monsieur de Frontenac has a soft place in his heart for all brave men. And if for no other reason than that the Jesuits and the Intendant detest and fear the *coureurs-de-bois*, he would cherish a certain sly tenderness for these hardy free folk of the forest. No, our quarrelsome Governor is never entirely happy unless he is involved in a quarrel; but he never will disturb the forest-runners."

Sitting in the quiet garden where the still air was fragrant with the scent of flowers and of the distant forests, I listened to this gentle lady who, in every fold of her simple habit, exhaled the subtle perfume of the old régime.

She had known my mother; and told me of her. She had known my cousin of Elven, and thought her lovely and spirituelle. With grief and dismay she had heard of the King's displeasure and of the ruin of our family, to whom her order owed so much.

She looked sadly at my gray garments and my cap and kerchief and buckled shoes, but asked no question; nor could I explain.

But I said to her: "Madame, whatever else they may be, the Aulones are no liars. Therefore you may believe me when I say that I do not merit this garb I wear, although I have passed two years in the Fortress Prison of Dieppe."

Her brown eyes filled with tears and she took my hands and pressed them between hers.

"I believe you," she murmured. "Prayer is the refuge of the guiltless as well as the guilty. You shall not lack for burning candles here, Michelle."

Well, there was nothing more that I could tell her or ask of her and her poor nuns. Nor did I desire to con-

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fess me to any priest in Quebec. For I was learning that Quebec was but a hot-bed of plot and of intrigue within intrigue—like some Italian city where every ear listens, every eye observes, every tongue betrays, and there is a poignard in every hand. Never had I heard of any city where reigned such pride, such profligacy, vanity, jealousy, deception. Extortion stained every official hand; bribery and cunning debased the fur trade and cheated King and peasant; ordinances were laughed at and brandy smuggled everywhere and trafficked in, while Governor and Jesuit fought over savage allegiance and savage souls, and the ragged lords of the seigniories strutted and bragged and starved rather than lift a finger to feed themselves.

“Ah, Michelle,” said Madame d’Aloste, “what Canada needs are hardy, thrifty peasants, and no more nobles—and, alas that I should say it!—no more nuns and priests.

“I am a devout Catholic, but I do not believe that Huron and Algonquin souls can be saved to God unless their minds also be educated and their bodies cared for. As well save the soul of some poor parrot we have taught to repeat the Credo. . . . But I must not voice such thoughts—for the very grass listens and repeats to the four winds whatever is uttered by human lips. And punishment comes very swiftly in New France.”

I kissed her pale hands—frail blossoms of old France which neither she nor I were destined to see again.

After a silence she asked me about my betrothal to the new Governor of Montreal and who he was. I said, quietly, that I was to marry him and that his office at Versailles carried him near the King’s person and was of a confidential nature which I did not clearly understand.

She said pleasantly: “Monsieur Gribouri is young, handsome, and has very excellent manners. He came this morning with a Father of St. Sulpice to pay us his

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respects, to arrange for your accommodation here, and to beg of our nuns to sew for you your trousseau."

I said nothing, but the idea made me feel faint and chilly.

She told me further that our ship had brought silks, laces, satins, and fine linens from France; and that these were to be had, now, in the shops and stores of the lower town.

But there was no interest for me in such things now. Sick at heart I managed to smile and thank her; and then spoke of something else as calmly as I could. But I knew there was no deceiving a woman who had been of the great world and who knew the human heart.

Well, after a little while she laid her lovely hands on my shoulders and kissed my forehead, and went away, leaving me seated there in the sunshine among the lilies, reseda and carnations.

I had been sitting there, thinking of milord, and stroking the yellow cat which had come out to keep me company and observe the birds with its bright green eyes, when I heard horses gallop up to the outer gate, and presently the jingle of the little bell.

Somehow I seemed to know that it was Gribouri; and looked up coolly and unsurprised when he came in hastily, hat in hand and plumes sweeping the grass.

Every ceremony he used, neglecting no politeness. I replied mechanically and then remained silent.

He told me in an impatient voice that the morning had brought a canoe and despatches from Monsieur de Frontenac who summoned him to Montreal without delay.

He supposed that he would be gone no more than two weeks—time to present credentials and learn the temper of the Governor General concerning his own local Governorship.

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"He is a violent man," said Gribouri with a grimace, "and no doubt will try to bully me and the Fathers of St. Sulpice who nominate me. But I care not, and am in nowise afraid of Monsieur de Frontenac and his curses and his loud voice of an enraged bull. . . But I had desired to remain with you in your loneliness, Michelle. . . ."

"I am well enough alone, Monsieur."

"I may teach you otherwise," he said in a low and tender tone that sickened me.

"Monsieur, has my English gentleman crossed the river?"

"Yes," said he, smiling at me, "and is far on his way to the Richelieu by this time."

"When did he set out?"

"Immediately after he landed."

"By canoe?"

"Yes, Michelle."

I was silent, and sat with eyes remote while, in my breast, slowly, slowly my heart was breaking down with every heavy beat.

He began to tell me that, as Governor of Montreal, he should have a lodging there; and, as Sub-Intendant, maintain a handsome house in Quebec.

He was watching me closely all the time. I felt it. After a while he said gently that the garments I wore did me no honour and himself even less, and begged me to visit the lower town with a lay Sister to aid me.

"For," said he, "you can not go about in the habit of a reformatory. Also, you should select materials and hasten your trousseau, for I mean to marry you with priest and notary as soon ever as I return from Montreal, and that will surely be within the fortnight."

I nodded.

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"Will you go tomorrow and purchase what you require, Michelle?"

"Perhaps."

He lingered, looked at his watch, loitered, consulted it again, got up and took leave of me.

"You are unhappy now," he said, "but I swear I shall make you drunk with love when we are married."

Like a wave, a sickness swept me to the very bones.

"Monsieur," I said, "be pleased to temper your emotion and your speech; for a young girl who has lost all there is to lose in the world is not likely to be flattered by attentions forced upon her in her solitude and grief."

"Have you no slightest tenderness left in your heart for me, Michelle?"

I looked at him in amazement. Then his disgusting vanity began to anger me.

"Your master," said I, "robbed me of my father; you have robbed me of the only other man I love and honour. Ask your own monstrous self-complacency, Monsieur, whether such brutality merits tenderness!"

His face darkened to a sombre red; he said slowly, under his breath: "You shall turn tender enough on your wedding night. I know you, Michelle, who have set your cheeks and lips blazing and fired every red drop of blood in your body with a single kiss!"

The infamy of this young man so enraged me that the violence of my wrath left me mute.

"Very well," said he, "if we must have it so in this hour. I have been vastly patient with you, Michelle; I am patient still. But shall not now have long to wait and eat my heart out, and sit alone, and lie and toss alone upon my bed and eat my heart out. . . ."

"Monsieur," I said harshly, "will you go to your Government and leave me now in peace?"

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He licked his thick lips with his tongue: "Yes—I will go." His eyes, which were black, had a reddish light in them; his mouth twitched.

"If ever," he said, "you meditate treachery to me, in that hour I shall take my debt of you, priest or no priest."

I could scarcely speak for fury:

"Yes," said I, "like all swine you care not what you pollute. But that is life in the *bas cour*."

He went so white at that that I thought he meant to strike me.

"Do you keep your word to me when I return? Yes or no?" he demanded.

"Oh," said I wearily, "when I first gave it, you were answered then for all time. But you are not fashioned to understand so delicate a matter."

His red mouth twisted with a distorted laugh.

"For every injury your lips utter," said he, "they shall one day beg of me a kiss. . . . And in that hour I shall have a jest to tell you, and you shall laugh till you weep, and over that for which once you only wept!"

I scarcely heard him, scarcely heeded him when he bowed to me and bowed again, and took his leave.

CHAPTER XXXII

I DID not go to the Lower Town. I did not lift a finger to assemble a trousseau. I did not buy an inch of silk or lace or ribbon, nor a single thread of fine linen. In my gray woolen gown of the hospital-reformatory I went about as I chose.

One day I was sitting in the convent garden eating grapes, with the yellow cat on my lap, and thinking of milord and of my father.

When the gate bell rang I paid it little attention, for the Sisters, on their errands of mercy, came and went that way in couples; and there were many sick in the hospitals.

A little later Madame d'Aloste came into the garden, and seemed troubled.

"The city is full of rumours," she said. "There are wounded men in the lower town; our nuns are going."

"Has there been fighting?" I asked.

"They say there has been a battle at La Prairie with English and Iroquois who came from Lake St. Sacrement."

I did not know where these places were, and she told me that La Prairie lay across from Montreal where, in the neighbouring parishes, the harvesters were busy.

"The Régiment d'Aulône has packed its knapsacks and marched to Three Rivers," she said. "I do not understand why Quebec should be left so naked. I have sent two nuns to ask our town major, Monsieur Prévost, to give me what news he has."

I could see she was very much disturbed, so I made her sit beside me and gave her some grapes. I asked

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no questions which must only add to her inquietude, but spoke of pleasant things to divert her.

A little while later the two nuns returned from Monsieur Prévost, and Madame d'Aloste went toward them.

Watching her face from where I sat I could see very plainly that the news was not good.

She came back to the wooden seat under the arbour, shaking her head.

"Here is the story so far," she said. "There are wounded men here from La Prairie. Those who brought them in the bateaux could hear cannon answering cannon from La Prairie to Chambly Fort and from Chambly to Montreal.

"It is true that the Régiment d'Aulone has marched. The Chevalier de Clermont has gone up the Richelieu with a scout. . . . And all this is very strange, Michelle, because but a week ago the furs had come down from the upper lakes for the first time in three years—a hundred and sixty-five canoes packed with beaver pelt!—a hundred thousand crowns in value!—and a great market was holden at Montreal. And if this be true that the English and Iroquois are at Chambly, then, even if we beat them off, Canada must starve."

"Why?" I asked who had not understood a word of all this.

"Because, now, in the instant of prosperity after three lean years, when the Lake Indians feared the Iroquois too much to bring in their peltry, this blessed flood of wealth is snatched once more from Canada by the English. It means beggary and starvation in Montreal, Three Rivers, and here in Quebec. Furs are our only source of trade—our only wealth. . . . It seems too cruel—too hard to bear. . . ."

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The gate bell was ringing again; a soldier in gray and green was there from the town major asking for nuns to care for another load of wounded from above. He came into the garden, an active, hardy fellow who had been disbanded from the Regiment of Carignan and who was now sergeant in a distant parish-battalion of militia.

"Ah, Madame the Superior," said he, "I came down with the bateaux from Montreal, and I beg to assure you that there is much confusion there."

"Are the English attacking Montreal?" she asked calmly.

"Oh, no, Madame; they ran for their boats and are gone back to their dear Albany with their Captain Schuyler and their Puritans and filthy Iroquois."

"Well, then?"

"It is Monsieur de Frontenac who is in a rage, and he foams, Madame. All combines to infuriate our Governor—the insult from the English, the interruption of the great fur market, and, lately, a terrible quarrel with the Fathers of St. Sulpice who have unloaded upon him a certain Sieur Gribouri as Governor of Montreal without consulting him, when already he had appointed Monsieur Callières."

"Oh," said the Superior, not looking at me.

"And as though that were not enough," continued the soldier, excitedly, "this Sieur Gribouri comes as Sub-Intendant to Monsieur de Champigny; and our Governor in his fury tells them both that nothing is lower in the animal creation than an Intendant, except a Sub-Intendant—of the existence of which creature he had been ignorant until he beheld Monsieur Gribouri."

A wild desire to laugh seized me; I turned my head aside so that the Superior should not see my features.

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"What else?" asked Madame d'Aloste in a voice not quite steady. And I knew that, in her relief, she also was near to laughter.

"Oh," said the soldier, "there is nothing further fit for ladies' ears, only that our Governor told the Intendant that all Intendants were no better than Royal spies set to watch him and encourage Jesuit and Sulpitian to thwart him."

"Did Monsieur de Frontenac dare say that?"

"Dare, Madame? Is there anything on earth that our lively Governor fears to say or do? No, Madame. He is running about the shores of Lake St. Louis like a mad dog, chasing the English, chasing the Iroquois, chasing the Sulpitians, chasing the Intendant and the Sub-Intendant. . . ."

A clear, nervous peal of laughter rang out in the Convent garden. I turned and caught her hands; and there, together, we rocked to and fro and cleared our overburdened hearts to the very depths of our souls with laughter—God's kindest medicine for fear, and His swiftest and surest.

Oh, the heavenly relief of this comedy staged by our gallant old pepper-pot when the terror of the Iroquois and dread of the English still left its chill in every breast from the upper lakes to the Basin of Quebec!

But the recollection of the wounded sobered us; nuns were sent to the Lower Town. And even before they started another soldier came to reassure us, saying that scouts were in from above with news that all was tranquil; and that the Régiment d'Aulone had halted, faced about, and was marching back to the fortress of Quebec.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ONE day early in October, when the wild pigeons had come into our woods and everywhere our peasants were netting and shooting them, a tall fellow appeared at our gate with a message which he said had been written for me. He was a thin and agile man, and as brown as an Indian, and he was dressed in beaded deer-skin gay with savage finery, from the shoulders, sleeves, and breeches of which tumbled a cascade of fringes.

Out of a gaudy pouch he took a letter; and, imagine my amazement when I discovered it was from the Governor General Count Frontenac!

Mademoiselle de Maniscamp,

Monsieur d'Aulone, your father, has mortally affronted my King and has done me great damage in my government of Canada by encouraging the *coureurs-de-bois* to trade without authority—the penalty of such forest-ranging being death when apprehended. Therefore, if I catch Monsieur d'Aulone I shall shoot him. But—I shall not catch him.

Nevertheless, I have the honour to inform you that the Aulones are a fine race of fearless soldiers and gallant and stainless gentlemen; and their women are of the same breed.

Therefore, Mademoiselle, as it appears that you are about to condescend to permit yourself to endure a legal and religious ceremony with a certain Monsieur Gribouri who is *not* Governor of Montreal

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and who never shall be, while I am Governor General of New France, I beg that you will graciously make known to me what little gift from the Governor General might not prove too unacceptable to you upon the occasion of your marriage to the ex-Sub-Intendant Gribouri who will leave Montreal tomorrow to marry you in Quebec, and immediately write many reams of paper to the King in useless complaint concerning my behaviour toward him. Because I have told him to go to the devil and take his Sulpitians with him.

Mademoiselle, I respectfully kiss your hand and beg to have the real honour of signing myself,

The admirer of your family, and your very humble servitor,

FRONTENAC,
Governor General.

Between amazement and laughter, and an inclination to tears, I knew not what to think or do, only that courtesy required some reply to this astounding communication.

So, by his tall fellow in gaudy beads and fringes, I sent this letter back to Montreal:

Monsieur Governor the Comte de Frontenac:

Monsieur,

The motto of our family is "Fearing God alone!" But I fear that I fear so charming and gallant a gentleman as is Monsieur *our* Governor who carries by storm a young girl whom he never even has seen.

To so boldly assault and to capture unseen a heart at such a vast distance—miles and miles away—must rank with the most gallant and amazing exploits of the palladins.

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Ah, Monsieur, my pride capitulates; and, as the wild pigeons have arrived; and as you desire to further honour me, send me, if you please, a little dagger, very sharp!—well, sharp enough to carve a pigeon's breast, at my wedding feast. And, as in duty bound, your petitioner will ever pray. . . .

Monsieur, I think a day will come when the Comte d'Aulone will take you by the hand and thank you for your pretty gift to her who thanks you now, and who begs the honour of making her adieux to you,

With more gratitude than ever you can understand,

MICHELLE DE MANISCAMP.

A week later came the silver-hilted dagger, delicate, thinly keen, and edged so sharp that it severed the coppery hair I plucked from my head to test its temper.

A half-breed Huron boatman brought it in a canoe. He and his wild fellows also brought Monsieur Gribouri and two secretaries from Montreal with two portfolios full of angry accusations against Monsieur de Frontenac which were to be sent to the King of France by the next ship. Unfortunately for Monsieur Gribouri, there would be no ship until next May.

When Gribouri came to wait upon me at the Recollettes', and discovered that I had not made any preparations for our marriage, his anger almost suffocated him, and he stood staring at me with tears of rage running down his twitching face.

"Michelle," he said, "you have insulted me more wantonly than has the Governor of New France who denies me my Sub-Intendancy and my government of Montreal, and who defies the King and the Seigniorship of St. Sulpice."

"There is no reason why I should insult myself," said

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I, coolly, "by decking out with tinsel a dead heart and a half-dead body to celebrate the last humiliation of my soul."

His anger seemed to have exhausted him and he leaned his head heavily upon his hand and looked vacantly at me. His dress was worn and soiled and still wet from the river voyage. His features seemed heavy and puffed, and swollen under the eyes as though from heavy drinking.

"Did you hear that there had been fighting at La Prairie?" he asked in a weary voice made harsh by the cold from which he was suffering.

I nodded.

"Had you no slightest concern regarding me, Michelle?"

"Come, sir," said I, "what is it you wish of me who have for you no sentiment except indifference born of unhappy resignation?"

He covered his face with both hands, and I saw a sob shake the faded ribbons on his silken shoulders.

"My God," he whimpered, "in what extremity am I who have no friend in this accursed western world save only Champigny. . . . Where a madman flouts the Fathers of the Sulpitian Seigniory and robs me of my government and denies me the Intendancy which the King's gracious majesty hath confirmed to me. . . . Where the woman for whom I once risked all, dared all, turns on me now like a rattlesnake to wound me with her cold poison to the death!"

"Monsieur," said I, "*you* have wounded *me* past all healing, and now you plan to do to death my very soul within me. If you would gain friends, show kindness; if you would acquire honours, deal honourably; and if you desire love, seek it where lies the seed, and not in a devastated and barren heart."

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"Michelle," he said, his loose mouth a-twitching, "in the Intendancy Palace of Monsieur Champigny is the apartment prepared for you and me. And there, so help me God, we shall lie this very night; and there you shall learn that a hair's breadth only divides love from hatred."

My mouth and tongue went dry at that, and my heart seemed to stop.

"You go dressed in hospital garb," said he. "Well, you have had your way with me. Now I take my way with you. And what you will not learn, nevertheless you shall learn it."

He got up like a drunken man and gave me a look out of bloodshot eyes:

"Make your adieux to your Recollettes. Your effects go to the Intendant's Palace. I have a chair for you outside the garden."

My stiffened lips formed the words, "As you like."

I went into the cloister and made my adieux to all.

Madame d'Aloste was very pale, but there were no tears. The yellow cat followed me to the garden gate where were bearers and a dingy gilded chair awaiting me. Gribouri had gone.

From the soiled window of the chair, looking back, I saw the cat regarding me out of slitted eyes.

Now the chairmen lifted me and at last I had started to make my Calvary.

We passed the new stone towers, ditched ramparts, and palisades of the Fortress where workmen were still labouring; passed on before the Château, the ruins of the Ursulines and their new structures; passed the Hôtel Dieu, the great church of Notre Dame, the vast Seminary, the Court House, then a tavern and a few houses on the square.

It is not far to the Intendant's Palace from the Châ-

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teau, going by the Hôtel Dieu and descending the Rock to the River St. Charles.

I left the chair and walked down to the foot of the declivity where Monsieur Gribouri stood with a priest and a notary who looked sharply at me with unfeigned curiosity, but otherwise behaved courteously enough.

Gribouri took my hand and conducted me into this vast, ugly, rambling structure of stone and timber which was called the Palace of the Intendant, and where soldiers walked guard and robed officials—judges, councillors, huissiers, and such—crossed and recrossed the court or entered or issued from the Palace with their covies of clerks, secretaries, notaries—all the lean and eager retinue who follow the heels of the *gens de robe*.

We passed into the Palace and immediately entered a cabinet where we stopped—I more dead than alive. And here—in my gray wool gown—with brevity and brusque brutality, standing, kneeling, and standing again in the sickly light of the dirty window, I was married to Armand Gribouri, Sieur de la Vigne, Confidential Secretary to his gracious Majesty the King, Governor-elect of the seigniory of Montreal, and Sub-Intendant attached to the Intendancy of the three districts of New France.

When the dreadful mockery was ended, Gribouri took me by the hand and led me through anterooms, salons, corridors, into the apartment offered us by Champigny.

It was handsome, even beautiful; and I have seen few finer in furnishing and proportion.

Servants bowed and drew aside respectfully as we passed through. I saw two maids laying out gowns of silk and laced underwear in an anteroom which gave from a bed-chamber which Gribouri told me was mine.

His own, which adjoined, he showed me, led me into his cabinet, into the great salon with its crystal lustres

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and gilded furniture, then by a back corridor again to my chamber.

"At your leisure," he said, "you will change your clothing to garments more suitable. We sup at eight, Madame."

We were standing on the threshold of my bedroom. I drew the gilded key from the door and dropped it into my bosom.

"Monsieur," said I, "clear away these servants, for I have a word for you in private."

He smiled and dismissed his people and turned to me, his wicked eyes brilliant with malice.

"Monsieur Gribouri," said I, "my debt is paid. You have had your way. You have had of me all you ever shall obtain. Make the most of it. For my privacy is my own. Carry it to the courts if you choose. What I refuse is cause for separation; but none can compel me to submit! . . . This night, and every night as long as ever I live on earth, my door is locked against you. . . . And that is what I have to say to you in this hour, Monsieur."

He laughed at me: "I have a key," said he, "which unlocks any door you lock, Michelle."

"If you threaten violence," said I, "I leave you in this instant."

"No," said he, "you will not leave me. And you will not lock your door against me."

Suddenly something in his smirk frightened me. He saw fear growing in my eyes; he laughed at me, took my hand, led me through the still apartment to an alcove where, in the plaster, was a small round *œil-de-bœuf*.

"Look down," he said.

I saw, beneath us, a small walled court, and, in it, a man seated upon a bench.

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The man was milord.

My knees weakened and I felt myself swaying, and laid my hand against the wall to sustain me.

"Michelle," said Gribouri grimly, "if on this night you lock your door against me, then I send your Englishman to Frontenac at Montreal, who will hang him from the gables of the fortified mill as surely as you and I stand here together man and wife!"

I could not speak at all; I lay against the wall, my sickened gaze upon the man below.

After a long while Gribouri's voice again: "Be pleased to make your choice, Michelle."

"So—you have lied to me," I whispered.

"No. He was set free. And he returned. This morning he was taken by a militia patrol in the Lower Town and, being English and unknown, has been held as a spy until the return of the Intendant whose functions concern all matters of the police."

I stared at Gribouri.

"It is true," he said. "You may prove it at the patrol post if you wish."

Somehow in all my horror and anguish I seemed to know he was not lying. But, oh God, what dreadful rashness had brought back milord to Quebec! Dumb terror repeated the question in my throbbing ears, and my terrified heart was answering that milord had come back here for love of me—scourged by that accursed hope that never dies, loving me still, unable to endure—he had come back to where I was.

I heard Gribouri's voice, calm in triumph: "Well, do you lock your door, Michelle?"

"And—if I do not—"

"Your Englishman shall have another chance for life."

"When?"

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"When you promise."

"Now? Will you set him free this instant?"

"Yes."

"Then—I promise I shall not lock my door," I gasped. My voice had become so small and strained and weak with fright that I could scarcely speak at all.

"Take me to him," I said hoarsely. "I know how to make him go and remain away never to return."

"Do you desire to interview him alone?" sneered Gribouri.

"No. Give me your hand. I mean to make an end of this!"

He gave me his hand, opened a little door, led me down a spiral stair to a guard-room where a militia soldier lay in a chair asleep.

He got up blinking at us when Gribouri shook him, and unbarred and opened the door of the court.

I could scarcely see milord, so blind with fear and grief was I when he rose from the bench and came toward us.

"Milord," said I, "my husband, who is Governor of Montreal and Sub-Intendant, gives you freedom because you were once my friend. So get you gone out of this French city, in God's name, and instantly, or they will hang you by the neck for spying!"

He stared at us and seemed confounded; then the swift blood mounted to his very hair; he looked me straight in the eyes.

"I did not understand," he said.

"Well, then, you understand now, do you not?" said I harshly. "Put on your hat and go with us, for we mean to see you afloat, and instantly; and with that have done for you the last good office within our power. Have you still your safe conduct?"

"My papers were taken from me, Madame."

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"Follow," said Gribouri curtly.

I gave my husband my hand, who led me back through the guard-room to the cabinet of police where was a lieutenant and an officer of the canoe service.

Gribouri noticed nobody, but seated himself and began to write.

Milord stood there very calm and grave, and at times I felt his still gaze on me, but could not sustain it, and fixed my gaze upon Gribouri.

He called presently for two men to take a passenger and three days' provisions. Then, looking up at milord, his wet pen poised:

"Where do you desire to land?" he demanded. "You will find our troops along the Richelieu as far as Saint Sacrement."

I turned and looked into milord's eyes, and said quietly: "Let me advise you to go to Tadousac by Beau-pré, and there take sail to your destination."

He bowed.

"The Saguenay," said Gribouri briefly to the chief of batteaux. "Provision accordingly. Hasten!"

He wrote for a while longer, then, sanding his passes, handed them to milord.

"Where is this gentleman's sword and shoulder-belt?" he demanded.

A soldier fetched both, and also a cloak—alas, the shepherd's cloak I knew so well!

"Come," said Gribouri briefly.

It is but a step to the river where the canoes lay. As we came out on the strand I saw two voyageurs stowing away sacks of provisions in an elm-bark canoe.

"There is your craft," said Gribouri to milord; "it is ready; and I think you understand you should lose no time."

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Milord thanked him very simply; gave me a quiet look; bowed very low to us both, turned and took his place in the canoe.

I said not a word, though a thousand struggled for utterance. I heard the bow-paddler cry, "*Au large!*" saw the canoe shoot out into the river.

While it remained in view I watched it. After that came over me such a weariness that I presently seated myself upon a great peeled elm log, and for a while remained motionless with closed eyes.

When my husband offered to reconduct me, I shook my head, saying I desired to rest here in the sunshine by the river, and would seek my chamber later.

"In time to dress suitably?" he asked.

I nodded.

I did not notice when he left. I sat for a long while in a kind of stupor, watching the sailboats on the river.

After a while I got up, not knowing even where I meant to go; but now my thoughts had begun to drive me into restless motion. Also, in my dazed mind the inevitable resource was slowly taking shape. I had foreseen it; hoped to avoid it. But it appeared that I could not.

I was now walking slowly along the strand under the Rock, along a street in the Lower Town, and was passing the two round towers with their flanking wings, when, of a sudden, I saw a face that I knew and two wide brown eyes gazing into mine.

"Nicole," I said weakly.

"Mademoiselle!"

She would have fallen at my feet had I not fallen into her arms. I could not utter a word; I kissed my foster-sister; hid my face on her breast; clung to her in an agony of grief past all thought and words.

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I know not how we got to her little house on the strand below, only I remember we went in a sailboat which she steered.

And, when we arrived, I saw the cows and pigs and chickens, and Colin stacking the yellow grain, who came running to kiss my hand and tell me that he and Nicole had been to the Ursulines and were refused all information regarding me by order of the Governor of Montreal.

And there in their whitewashed cottage we gathered who were exiles from Aulone, to laugh and cry and tell our histories and huddle together—all that was left of our great family in Aulone—two peasants and a wretched girl who had been their mistress once, and who now had sunk lower than the humblest.

To see my dear Nicole and our little cherub drummer-boy here together filled me with poignant happiness. But of my marriage I had no heart to tell them yet. I could not bear to.

Colin had carried the message of my arrival to Chambly where a comrade promised to give it to one, Sanglasse, a forest-runner whose reckless course would soon or late take him to the forest fort of the coureurs-de-bois.

"They have no fear of Frontenac," said Colin, "nor he of them; but, like two great, dangerous beasts, they respect each other and range each in their own domain."

Nicole brought me a cup of milk, wild honey, and *tartines*. I had not known I could eat; but I ate and listened, and rested on the rude couch which Colin had fashioned with his own hands out of ash trees and river willows. And Nicole sat on the floor beside me, and pressed her dear face against my knees and hands.

I know not what had become of me had I not found Nicole in the bitterest hour of all my life.

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Now I felt strength returning, and courage to face what fate still held for me.

But time had fled; the setting sun spread a wild glory behind the Rock; I could not tarry longer.

Together these two dear comrades of Old France carried me once more to the Lower Town, and there I made them leave me, for I could not yet endure that they should know what I had done.

And so, slowly, and alone, through the sunset light to the Palace; more slowly through the gates; and so crept through the endless corridors to that fearsome place where now, at last, my destiny awaited me.

CHAPTER XXXIV

WELL, I had come to a final conclusion when at last I arrived under the great arch of the Palace gateway. I had made my stations; my Calvary was at hand.

Red sunset light suffused the courtyard and made brilliant the red robes, violet and black of Palace officials hurrying out of the Court of Justice to seek their homes and wives and suppers in the Lower Town.

All these good people were going home. Softly came the Angelus from the Jesuit Monastery across the River St. Charles; greffiers, guards, halberdiers, huissiers, petty bureau officials, issued from the entrance to the King's Stores, some to depart, others to go to barrack and cantonment; and, out of the prison door, walked nuns of the hospital and two silent Recollet Friars—Franciscans of the Strict-Observance—in their coarse gray soutanes girded with the knotted cord of St. Francis, their pointed hoods, and wooden sandals.

Slowly I passed all these, moving through the quadrangle until I came to the door in the long Palace façade which led to the Intendant's residence.

Soldiers on *corvée* straightened up and kept their heads turned stiffly toward me until I had passed them. I said: "Good evening, friends."

A soldier on sentry presented his piece; I said, "Good evening," and walked on. Up the Intendant's staircase I passed, leisurely, no longer afraid. At the head of it some superior servant—I know not what he was, but he wore a silver chain and carried a staff—bowed, retreat-

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ing backward, and opened both gilded doors. I almost laughed—for they open *both* doors at Versailles only for the most exalted. . . . And, through them, I moved serenely in my prison garb of gray.

Through anteroom, saloon, dining room I walked, into my own cabinet, and entered my bed-chamber.

To my maids who, while not forgetting their manners, clearly did not know how to take me, I commanded a bath. There was no bath in the Palace. So I bade them go to the kitchen and fetch a copper of heated water.

When I had bathed, they supposed, poor things, that I would now be pleased to cease this perplexing harlequinade, discard my peasant garb, and put on some one of these fine robes which must have come from France on the ships that brought me.

I let them show the finery to me, then bade them lay all this aside and bring me my own chemise and stockings which I had worn when first arrested in Dieppe, and which, in prison, I had washed and mended.

They combed my hair and dressed it in anxious silence. Then I dismissed them, and dressed me in my prison garb and buckled shoes.

As I stood in the candle light, tying the latches, there came a scratching at my door; and I knew who it must be aping the custom at a court which I never was to see again.

"Well," said I, "if it is not the cat, come in, then!"

Gribouri stood there ablaze with silk and cloth of silver and scented like a garden.

He looked at me, looked around at the finery and tinsel trailing from bed and chair and sofa to the polished floor.

"Madame," he said sternly, "this is your wedding night! Be so good as to clothe yourself suitably and shame me no longer before my servants!"

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"I wear what suits me," said I. "If you think I shame you before your servants at table, why, I would very gladly sup here alone to spare you mortification."

"Will you obey me!" he demanded sharply.

"No," said I, "I will not."

He struggled with his irritation; contrived to control it.

"Michelle, I request—beg. . . ."

"Quite useless," I interrupted; "you waste breath. I owe you nothing, and that I shall pay you always on demand."

I tied my larchettes, looked at my hair again in a hand-glass, laid it aside and gazed quietly at my angry husband.

"Well," said I, "will you send me a dish of broth here? I require no more. Even less if you choose."

His face was red with rising wrath, and he licked his loose, dry lips continually.

Now, behind him, appeared the knock-kneed major-domo—he of the silver chain and staff of office; and when he had bowed three separate bows he told us that we were served. The petty pretense of ceremony and fashion in this poor, savage land amused me.

I looked at Gribouri and laughed. For an instant a flash of devil's fury lit up his black eyes. Then, with his under-lip hard-bitten, he gave me his hand. And we went to table in our silks and peasant wool.

Men of his origin and class and education make vast importance of little things. It is the small observances and customs that have made them, and they fear to let loose of these lest again they themselves become as nothing. They have nothing to fall back upon. Nor are capable of understanding that nothing really matters when one's self approves.

Well, it was a death's feast for all the lights and flow-

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ers and fruits and wines, and servants behind our chairs and others always running.

He was afraid to speak to me lest he show his rage to the servants, yet was afraid not to speak fearing their ridicule.

Once he ventured to remark that I ate little.

"I eat," said I, "to satisfy a natural and modest appetite, but I do not wish to stuff myself."

Well, at last the mockery was ended; basins and napkins presented; and so, with ceremony, to the silent salon where I seated myself tranquilly upon a tabouret and sent a servant to fetch my sewing.

Gribouri had his wine and a pack of cards to amuse him; and dice, too; and thus the evening passed in silence save for the rattling dice and the sound of some soft, distant bell tolling the death of hours.

When ten o'clock sounded from the Hôtel Dieu I passed my needle through the hem, folded my linen, and rose.

"Monsieur," said I, "today you had my promise that this night I should not lock my door against you."

"Yes," he said, his black eyes narrowing on me.

I took from my bosom the key to my chamber and laid it on the gilded table.

Then, from my bosom, I drew the little dagger which Count Frontenac had given me for my wedding gift.

"To carve a pigeon's breast," said I, showing it to him. . . . "So—I leave my door unlocked."

A heavy flush surged over his face.

"What do you mean?" he said, wetting his loose, parched lips.

"I mean that this little blade is tempered to cut tender things, Monsieur—as tender as a—*pigeon's* breast. . . . Ah, Monsieur, it is keen enough to sever the frailest fila-

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ment—frail as the thread of life itself. . . . Look, Monsieur!—it glitters like a lancet! And, like a lancet, it is also an instrument to probe bruised honour and relieve it of all pain.”

I smiled at him and dropped it into my bosom. Then, making my manners exactly measure to his quality and degree, I bade him good evening, and went leisurely to my chamber.

It was nearly midnight when at length he came a-scratching. I had not undressed. I lay upon my bed, thinking of milord and of my father.

When I made Gribouri no answer, he knocked loudly to awaken me. After a while he opened the door, and his candle light fell across my bed.

“Michelle,” said he in a thick, unsteady voice.

“It is quite useless,” said I, “if you think to use your strength. Because, when you are gone, I promise you to end it all. . . . And you know I keep my word.”

He came toward me muttering and mumbling like a drunken man and took me by both wrists, pinning me there upon my pillow. Then, in a crazed voice, he fell to pleading, then to cursing me, then broke down and sobbed and sobbed until his wrath and passion flamed again and he clutched me and poured out wild, broken breathless words that scorched me to shame and kindled in me bitterness, contempt, and scorn immeasurable.

But I saw in his bloodshot eyes that there was in him a ferocity akin to madness; that my time at last was come; that he meant to have his ruthless way with me for once at least, and at any cost to me or to himself.

Terror sickened me; but it passed, leaving me listless and benumbed.

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I could not move, so brutally he clutched me. To the pain I seemed indifferent.

I said: "I shall not survive the degradation of this night. And in after years you shall never doubt that it is you who do this murder, and not I—God forgive me. . . ."

"Better this way," he panted, "than to endure a barren life starving for you—"

"Mary Mother! have a care what you do. . . ."

"By God, you shall love me. . . ."

His voice was lost in a deafening clap of thunder, and the whole room flashed crimson for an instant.

Still pinioning my arms he turned his head in a stunned way and stared at the window; and instantly the window-panes flashed crimson again and the whole Palace shook with the awful shock of a cannon shot. From the bastion opposite it came again; and plaster fell on my bed in a cloud of dust.

Suddenly, in the Palace barracks, a woman flung open a casement and began to shriek and scream. High above her on the Fortress a drummer beat the alert. Almost instantly the court echoed with the racket of drums; hoarse voices were shouting; doors burst open, shutters rattled and slammed; there came a rush of feet below; the noise of horses; and a child's thin, frightened wail:

"Oh, God, the Iroquois!"

Gribouri's weakening clutch fell away from me; he drew his knee from my body, straightened himself with a stupefied air, and took an uncertain step toward the window which was now all lit up by the flames of torches in the court below. To the deafening noise of drums beating the alarm and the shrieking and shouting and galloping of horses, now was added the deep, terrifying warning

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of the bourdon booming out an iron summons through flame-shot darkness.

Three high beacons burned upon the Fortress; a bright tongue of fire shot up from the gallows-cage above the Rock.

Gribouri came back to me where I stood by the table in the middle of the room, striving to light my candle from the one he had left there burning.

He said something, but I could not understand him in the noise of the bells now ringing and clashing in every tower and steeple around us.

He took hold of my arm and shouted in my ear: "If it's the Iroquois or the English or both, this is no place for you on the river strand!"

Our poor servants, half naked, came running through the salon with streaming candles. I said to Gribouri:

"You had better dress."

An ensign of militia came in looking for my husband. When he saw him he saluted coolly.

"What is this alarm?" demanded Gribouri, blinking at him out of inflamed and swollen eyes.

But the ensign knew nothing, only that the cannon of Fort St. Louis had awakened him and the city outside was frantic with fear.

Gribouri turned to me and said that he would dress, and that I should take my people to the salon and await him.

I told my servants to go back and dress and then join me.

The ensign, who seemed calm enough, went with me to the salon carrying my candle.

"I know not what has happened, Madame," he said respectfully, "but the people are wild with terror. And one can hardly blame them who stood upon the strand below La Chine but a few months since and saw men

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and women and little children agonizing in the Iroquois fires across the water—”

He passed his hand across his eyes as though to clear them of the horror. Gribouri came in buckling his sword belt.

“Everybody is leaving the Lower Town,” he said. “The tide is in, and nobody knows what may be coming out of the darkness across the river. . . . And we are stripped, here in Quebec; for yesterday the Régiment d’Aulone marched again for Three Rivers. . . . If the English and Iroquois are upon us it may go rudely for the Lower Town.”

He spoke without any fear, but without discretion, too, for our frightened servants were listening and huddling around us, and it seemed needless to terrify them further.

I spoke a word or two of reassurance to them; took my two maids each by the hand, and followed Gribouri and the infantry ensign down to the torch-lit quadrangle where a troop of horsemen were forming, and the teams for three pieces of light artillery were being saddled and harnessed.

I saw men of the batteau and canoe service running down to the palisades where militia were mustering from the ford to Mountain Street.

“Well, then,” said Gribouri loudly, walking toward the horsemen, “does anybody know what this noise is all about?”

I could not hear the answer made him, but I heard him ask sharply where such news had come from; and a cavalry officer replied that scouts had brought it up from the Saguenay, and that it was certain, and the message had been sent on post to Montreal.

I said to Gribouri that I would take my people to the Ursulines’ garden if the Lower Town had become unsafe.

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"Do so," said he; "and if there be any sudden cannonading from across the river or the Basin, go to the Seminary for shelter. . . . Those damned Jesuits build solidly against the day of wrath," he added with a sneer.

As I led my frightened servants across the courtyard I saw Gribouri mounting a horse which a soldier brought from the stables on a quick trot.

The cavalry also were in motion; I waited for them to pass, and heard somebody say that they were going to cross at the bridge-of-boats and raise all the *côte* below.

Carrying my people with me I climbed the acclivity to the Ursulines' where we found a throng of people from the Lower Town crowding in and dragging their frightened children with them.

An officer and two soldiers in the old Carignan uniform were trying to keep order; the square was surging with refugees from the strand who came into the city driving cattle and geese and hogs. A deafening tumult filled the Upper Town—the wild, unceasing clashing of church bells, the roar of voices, the bellowing of cattle, barking of dogs, children crying. And over all flickered the crimson light of blazing beacons on the Rock.

The Carignan officer saw us and beckoned us. I told my servants to go in, but would not enter the Ursulines, and turned again to force my way out of this surging mass of people who were suffocating me.

Clear of them at last, I leaned against the tavern wall of Jacques Boisdon to recover strength and breath; for the noise and pressure were making me feel a little faint.

Some very young officers, who seemed gay enough, came out of the tavern, and I asked one of them to tell me what all this noise meant and what was happening, for I did not know.

"Why," said he, smiling, "Messieurs the English are

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coming up the river with a great fleet of warships, and we shall soon have noise enough to suit everybody."

"To cannonade the city?"

"Certainly, my pretty lass. Do you think they come to admire it, and to blow kisses up to us upon our Rock?" He laughed at his own jest and patted my cheek: "Oh, no," he said, "what they blow up will burn hotter than kisses, pretty lass. . . ."

I shrank aside to avoid him, but he caught me and kissed me and let me go, while his comrades laughed and rallied him; and they all went swaggering off to face fate with a gibe—and there was no anger in my heart with these young men whose perfumed gloves and hair smelled of Old France a thousand leagues.

As I wandered about through the swarming streets I realized that my heart had not quickened by a single beat; that of such a situation as now menaced us—of sieges, marches, armed men, battles, I had no slightest fear.

Near the Bishop's Palace I saw a company of leather-clad scouts kneeling down and a priest instructing them and giving them absolution.

In the Grand Place a battalion of regulars stood behind stacked arms awaiting distribution of soup and bread.

Nuns of the Hospital were hurrying in and out of the Basilica from the spire of which glimmered a lighted lantern.

Through St. Louis Street cannon rumbled; St. John Street was full of cattle; the Place d'Armes swarmed with refugees continually arriving from the *côtes* and distant parishes; and I saw them toiling up Mountain Street below the Jesuits' College with their little bundles and their half-naked children who made a constant clat-

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tering with their sabots on the way which was paved with peeled logs.

To descend to the Lower Town was difficult, but I thought I might encounter Nicole there, and take her with me to the Recollettes. And God was kind, for I saw her almost immediately standing near a battery of twenty-four pound cannon where some messengers of the canoe service were gathered to await despatches and orders for Montreal.

Seeing me she uttered a passionate little cry and ran to me to kiss my hand.

"Oh, Mademoiselle!" she said, "I have been in the Upper Town to look for you, but nobody seemed to know you there. . . ."

"Where is Colin?"

"Gone to Montreal with despatches for Monsieur our Governor. He must come to our aid quickly; the English fleet is already above Tadousac. And if the Iroquois have surprised the upper forts we do not know. That is what I fear for Colin."

"The Régiment d'Aulone is at Three Rivers. Colin will be safe, so far," I said gently.

"Oh, yes, Mademoiselle, but we desperately need our Governor to hearten us."

"He will come, darling. . . . Did you have to leave your cows and chickens in Beauport?"

"No," said she; "Colin was obliged to go instantly to Montreal, but a poor batteau man helped me, and we got all our stock and household furniture and some sacks of flour and apples and a cask of cider into his boat; and, it being flood tide, carried everything up the river to a safe *côte* beyond Cap Rouge.

"But we could not take our wheat, alas! Oh, such wheat! Such clover hay! And a great pit of apples, and

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one of pompions and squashes. But I do not believe the Iroquois will discover them, though only God knows what they will do to our dear house and barn. . . .”

“Nothing, darling—because here is Quebec and worth far more to them, if ever they can plunder it, than the plunder of little farms. . . . Where do you mean to sleep and eat, Nicole?”

“God knows. . . .”

“Yes, and so do I. Come,” said I, taking her by the hand, “the Recollettes always is open to us of Aulone.”

I was deathly tired; I longed for a bed as a lost soul longs for Heaven. Yet one paramount and blessed thought sustained me, that milord must soon encounter this English fleet, and find at last, among his own people, that safety for which I had trembled and prayed and wept so long—oh, Mary Mother!—so many, many bitter days and sleepless nights.

CHAPTER XXXV

WE lay late, I in my old nest, Nicole upon the sofa at my feet. It was she who awoke first and went to fetch my chocolate and *tartine* and grapes.

Sunshine filled the room, but outside the October air was keen and smelled already of frosts to come.

All the news and gossip of the little cloister my foster-sister brought to me, which was this: that every hour our Canadian and Huron scouts were coming in from Beaupré and below to warn us that the English fleet was standing up the river; that the Puritan Admiral, Sir William Phips—he who had taken from us Port Royal and from Meneval his silver spoons—led all the fleet in his great flagship, *The Six Friends*, which strange name meant the English and their allies, the Five Nations of the Iroquois, and was designed in compliment to these murderous savages.

Further, it was said that the English fleet carried an army which was to land and assault the city while the ships of war lay in the Basin and knocked our Rock to pieces.

And so much for the enemy.

As for us, our horsemen, scouts, and Indian runners were hurrying through the province to call into Quebec every soul outside Montreal and Three Rivers. Messengers were on their way to Montreal to summon our Governor and to recall the Régiment d'Aulone from Three Rivers.

Our town major was cheerful and indefatigable and had

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called all incapable of bearing arms to work on the fortifications.

From all this I gathered that although the danger was real and near, it was not pressing.

Nicole talked of Colin and of her cows and pigs and chickens, and her big eyes sometimes filled with tears. She wished to go to the Cap Rouge *côte* to caress her cow. I also desired to go to the Intendancy and gather my effects; for never again would I remain there even if I had to starve in the forests alone.

So Nicole and I hastened to Mountain Street and there separated, she to go by canoe and I afoot along the log fortifications.

There was not a soul in the apartment. I gathered together into a bundle the articles with which I had landed. Of the sentry at the gate I made no enquiry, but he recognized me and informed me that the town major had sent Monsieur Gribouri to Beauport by water with three hundred sharpshooters to drive off any English or Iroquois who tried to land there.

I was grateful enough to be rid of him. I took up my bundle like any peasant and climbed to the Upper Town. The Hospitalières and Ursulines were feeding hundreds of refugees in their gardens with bread and soup and apples. In the square some militia had made a great fire where two sheep and an ox were being roasted whole.

As I entered the garden of the Recollettes I heard the drums of the Régiment d'Aulone returning from Three Rivers; and from my window I saw refugees and militia from the *côtes* above and across the St. Lawrence hastening to enter the fortified enceinte.

Madame d'Aloste stood beside me, watching the constant stream of these unhappy people with their cattle, sheep, hogs, horses, ducks, geese, and turkeys toiling

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across the plateau. All around the gallows on the Buttes-à-Neveu these beasts were pastured, and tall fellows in deer-skin guarded them with guns.

Here, now, I first saw the *Peau Rouge*—Indians of the Ojibway and Ottawa nations. They were in their paint and feathers, and seemed like demons to me. Such cruel eyes! Some of our scouts were with them, and they, too, had smeared their features with paint and wore the gaudy savage finery of their red allies.

Nicole came from Cap Rouge, having embraced her cows to her heart's desire.

That afternoon, accompanied by the yellow cat, we took our sewing to the garden. It was chilly even in the sun. Dried leaves blew about in little whirls with rustling noises, and the flowers, poor things, seemed to understand that they had not very long to bloom. Everywhere ants were making little mounds of sand; furry brown caterpillars travelled rapidly up and down the paths, but I do not believe they knew where they were going.

Every little while a nun would ascend to the gallery around the roof of our chapel and look off over the water toward the Point of Orleans. Everywhere on every tower and spire and chimney and roof we could see people standing and gazing down the river for a dreaded glimpse of the English fleet.

Evening approached, and no sign of an enemy. An angry sunset clotted with clouds threatened rain; and that night I was awakened by thunder which, at first, I took for distant cannon. But when I went to the window I saw lightning over the river; and it had begun to rain a little.

Rain fell almost every day for nearly a week, and during all that time not a sign was seen of the English or of any Iroquois. Nor, alas, had we heard a word from

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Monsieur de Frontenac. But it is a long way from Montreal to Quebec, and we knew our doughty Governor never would abandon us.

He should have had the news from us by the tenth of October. It was now the thirteenth; and no Frontenac; and, thank Heaven, no Admiral Phips who, they say, is six feet tall, and eats raw beef, and beats his officers with a stick and throws chairs at all who disagree with his opinions.

Mary Mother, I thought, is this the Englishman to whom milord will go for safety? Certainly they would quarrel because milord, who also is a naval captain—or was—does not in the least resemble this predatory Puritan who, they say, robbed poor Meneval of his very breeches, and even took all his night caps, four pair of silk garters, and three wigs! And it seems a disgusting thing to me that any man should wear another man's wigs and breeches.

However, I heard in the convent and in the streets many amazing tales of the English and that they were cold, treacherous, brutal, and often drank blood instead of soup. Which both amused and angered me because I knew something of these people, and one of them was my lover.

Also I knew that he would certainly volunteer aboard one of Sir William's ships. I knew it as I knew God lived in Heaven. And it thrilled me with a strange and passionate pride that this man should once more set his stern young face against this city where he knew I was. I saw his face when he left. And I knew he was coming back unchanged and still in love; and, perhaps, because of love. For he was no brawler nor adventurer, and England had cast him out as Old France had cast my father out, and me.

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Well, let him come. Life was not so kind that it mattered any longer. Happy for us if we could die, he on his smoky deck, I among the ruins of Quebec.

About half-past eight that night some horsemen came to our gate. Gribouri was with them, but I sent word that I refused to see him except in the presence of the Lady Superior.

He came into the little antechamber reserved for visitors, where Madame d'Alosté and I awaited him.

Briers had torn his clothing and he was wet and muddy. He was sufficiently polite; made excuses for his condition and behaved as though all were well between us. But now and then I caught a stealthy glance directed at me and his black eyes seemed malignant in the shadowy candle light.

He said that he had been scouting below Beauport and had seen the English vessels—forty sail—and that four great ships led them. He told us that the English fleet had no pilot and was coming up slowly, feeling their way; but that they were not far off.

Our sharpshooters followed them abreast along the shore, reinforced by Abanaki Indians and some armed settlers, but they were not enough to prevent the English from landing, and that was why he had returned to Quebec to tell this to Major Prévost.

Madame d'Alosté asked him very quietly whether he had seen the town major.

"Yes," he said, "and though he pretends to be confident, everybody knows that Quebec must fall unless this noisy, bragging Frontenac arrives with troops and Indians in time to reinforce us."

"Is it very likely that Monsieur de Frontenac will abandon us?" I asked, astonished.

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"How can I guess what such a person means to do who denies me my government of Montreal?" replied Gribouri sullenly. "Who can understand the caprices of such a mind? He may abandon Quebec and march to the Mississippi for all I can tell."

"That is not like what I hear of him," said I, coldly.

Gribouri began to range the little salon with an agile, graceful movement like a cat seeking an exit from a strange room. He was talking all the while: "Even if old Frontenac arrives in time he has not many men to bring. . . . What force will we have to defend this city? A few regulars, a few militia, a few armed and ragged peasants, and some painted Indians. And Boston sends an Admiral and an army and forty sail against us! No, I do not like the situation."

His tone annoyed me; and I said that I did not believe the way to consider a question was to complain about it.

He gave me an ugly look: "Complain?" he repeated. "Why should I not complain who am insulted and overlooked by this irascible Governor, and have to take orders from the town major?"

I said: "Such matters are personal and therefore selfish, and should come later. There is now only one object to be attained: to save this city from the English!—and it makes no difference how it is done or by whom. . . ."

"What child's chatter!" he interrupted with a smile of contempt. "Would you teach me the art of war, Madame?"

"I could teach you one of its principles, Monsieur."

His smile became ironical: "Really," he said, "and on what authority?"

"On the authority of Monsieur le Comte d'Aulone, late maître-de-camp of the Régiment d'Aulone. It was

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he, Monsieur, who told me that the achievement was everything, the individual nothing. It was Turenne, Monsieur, who taught my father this first principle of all noble aspiration; and it was my father who taught me."

"Very fine," he sneered, "but not suited to modern times. Turenne died fifteen years ago, and . . ." he looked me insolently in the face—"your father, Madame, is scarcely the person to teach exalted principles to anybody."

His words lashed me across the face; my breath left me for a moment. But I had invited it. When one frequents gutters one is certain to get splashed.

Madame d'Aloste gave me a distressed look; I turned my back on Gribouri and went to her and laid my hands in hers. She was a great lady; and she was right. One does not notice injuries hurled from a back alley.

"Monsieur Gribouri," she said, speaking to him over my shoulder, "the courage of our people in Quebec depends upon the cheerfulness and self-sacrifice of those who lead them. If you have any misgivings concerning the situation you could best serve us by leaving us."

"M-madame," he stammered. "I do not understand you!"

She said quietly: "God does not give normal understanding to everybody, Monsieur," and she turned her back on him and led me from the room.

That night, while Nicole was undressing me, we heard a most horrid howling outside, and we ran to the window and saw the Huron Indians coming in—dreadful shapes in the torchlight, brandishing their guns and hatchets, screeching, dancing in the smoky glare. There were scores and scores of them; and they raised a terrifying yell when our Indians from the St. Francis mission ad-

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vanced to meet them—these, too, as daubed and smeared, and feathered and naked as the savages from the upper lakes.

Mary Mother, I think that I have had a glimpse of hell, for no scene could be more dreadful.

All through the night, lying abed, I could hear peasants and Indians from remote districts arriving at our gates; all night long the battle lanterns' lurid light shone over the ramparts of Fort St. Louis and the batteries at the Sailor's Leap and the Windmill.

I slept, but waked continually, dreaming of drums and a cannonade and of tall walls falling.

About eight o'clock in the morning a cannon shot brought me bolt upright in bed. Another blast from the Windmill battery, and I sprang out of bed as Nicole entered with my chocolate tray and the last rose from the garden.

"Mademoiselle!" she cried, "our Governor is arriving from Montreal! All the town is running down Mountain Street to greet him!"

I swallowed my chocolate while Nicole bathed me and got me into my clothes. Then I pinned the rose to my bosom and we ran out and across to Mountain Street and down toward the Lower Town where a long line of canoes coming down the river, full of officers and soldiers, were just landing.

"Which is he?" I cried breathlessly, and could scarcely hear her for the roar of cheers where people waved hats and scarfs in a frenzy of welcome, and soldiers tossed up their muskets and Indians screeched and fired their guns into the air and capered like red devils in the pit.

I saw a man coming up Mountain Street carrying his plumed hat in one hand and his buff gloves in the other.

He was of medium height, fine and straight of body

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and limb, and his handsome head was of purely military type with small mustache upcurled, keen, brilliant eyes under a slightly lurking frown, and a mouth that sometimes was leonine, sometimes humorous, sometimes charming, fascinating, almost tender in its expression.

He was seventy; he looked fifty or less. Oh, Mary Mother, I knew the type—knew it and loved it—all that was of France most nobly French!—Louis de Buade, Count of Palluau and Frontenac, Seigneur of the Island of Savary, Colonel of the Normandy Regiment, Marshal in the armies of the King, Governor and Lieutenant-General in Canada, Acadia, New Foundland, and other dependencies of France in the Western World!

As he passed us I tore off my little starched cap of the hospital and waved it above my head, and cried with all my ardent voice: "*Vive notre Général! Vive l'ancien régime! Vive l'armée!*"

He heard me in all that uproar; he turned his head swiftly, and his whole face sparkled.

"Mademoiselle with the pretty red hair," said he, "you are very kind to the old régime and to an old man. Give me the rose from your breast to renew my youth!"

Swift as I could pluck it I gave him my flower, murmuring: "A rose for a dagger, my General, and a poor girl's prayers forever."

"Oho!" cried he with the gayest of laughs; "so it is a daughter of Aulone who cheers for the old régime? I might have known!"

And he made me the most charming salute that ever I have had from any man, and walked on through the thunderous acclamations of the crowd.

All the way to Fort St. Louis his progress was an increasing triumph; everybody joined whether politically or religiously opposed—Jesuits, Ursulines, Sulpitians, In-

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tendants' body-guards. I saw the seven gentlemen of the Council drawn up at the Fortress gates to pay their respects to the man who had humiliated them more than once; I saw the Bishop bestow his blessing, forgetting what this fiery Governor had done to every ecclesiastic in New France from Fénelon to himself; magistrates whom he bullied hailed him rapturously as the saviour of Canada; the Superior of the Jesuits and the former Bishop, Laval, appealed to him in the name of God, his Holy Mother, and all the Saints and Angels to stand to the last against the Puritan soldiery who would desecrate their altars as they had at Port Royal; and they promised to die in their chapel if the heretics should prevail.

In the Place d'Armes the Governor mounted a horse, waved his plumed hat gaily to impose silence, and, standing in his stirrups, surveyed the throng with a merry, mocking eye.

"What a noise are you making," he said, "to bid *bon jour* to a man old enough to be the grandfather of you all!

"Well, then, I salute you, *mes enfants*.

"They tell me that the English are coming to pay us a little visit of politeness.

"I have come from Montreal to put myself at your head to receive Messieurs the English with every fitting ceremony. See to it that you remember your manners and do not try to get ahead of me.

"Be of good courage and gay heart. If we are not many we are, nevertheless, enough.

"And I have to tell you that Monsieur the Governor of Montreal is marching to our aid with a thousand men. As we all are French it is not necessary for me to remind you to do your duty.

"*Allons*, then!—with good will and light hearts for

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the honour of God, the King, Canada, and Quebec!"

Amid the storm of cheers he laughed and wheeled his horse slowly along the crowded street; and to the brilliant staff of mounted officers who surrounded him he pointed out this spot and that to be fortified and defended.

I saw Gribouri on horseback with Prévost and the Intendant Champigny, and a troop of horse. Frontenac gave Gribouri an ironical look:

"Monsieur," he said, "your news from Beauport does not alarm me, it pleases me, because, the more Englishmen, the better we shall fight. Be good enough to take your horsemen back and bring me a really terrifying report."

Gribouri, scarlet with mortification and rage, jerked his horse around and spurred him brutally, followed by his riders at a gallop; and I saw them disappear in the direction of the heights of Sainte Geneviève.

Our Governor rode on in his tour of inspection; the crowds followed, and Nicole and I among them; and we saw the new battery of eight guns and the barricades around the Palace, the batteries of the Saut and the Wind-mill battery.

At the gates of the Hôtel Dieu I caught sight of Madame d'Aloste, who stood in conversation with Madame de Champigny, Mother Juchereau, and some Ursulines and nuns of the Hospital.

When Madame d'Aloste perceived me she beckoned me.

"Here," said she to the others, "is a daughter of Old France who has become very dear to me, and who is ready to aid us in this hour of trial."

If they noticed my garb at all these ladies were too well bred to show surprise, and all spoke of me with the utmost courtesy, and told me something of the situation, how

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the vast cellars of the Ursulines and the Hôtel Dieu were filled with refugee women and children, and that it was probable that the Seminary would be turned into a fort.

I said to Madame de Champigny that I would very gladly help in feeding the poor or caring for the sick and wounded, or would wash and cook and do any servant's work.

Before it was decided what I should do, we heard the clanking of artillery, and the trampling gallop of the gun-teams and of horsemen. Cannon were coming up the street, and Monsieur de Frontenac and his staff were with them.

When the Governor saw us he got off his horse and came to us, hat in hand, and we all curtseyed with every possible respect.

He said to Madame d'Alosté, "I am sorry to park my reserve artillery behind the Recollettes'"—he waved his hand toward the passing cannon—"but necessity knows no respect, Madame. So be good enough to bring your nuns to the Château where they will be safe until this affair is ended. . . ."

His restless eyes caught sight of me and his delightful smile made his whole face brilliant.

"Well," said he, "did you carve the pigeon's breast?"

I blushed violently: "No, Monsieur the Governor. . . ."

"What, was there no banquet then?"

"Untasted, sir."

His amused, ironic gaze was piercing me and my face was burning up.

"Where are your quarters?" he asked abruptly.

"At the Recollettes, Monsieur."

"Come to the Château with Madame d'Alosté. Be there in half an hour, if you please. . . ."

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He bowed to the ladies, got into his saddle and rode away toward the Western Gate, followed by the gold-laced, gaily uniformed youngsters in his train—Clermont, Sainte-Hélène, Valrenne, and others whom I did not know by sight.

On St. Louis Street I heard the drums of the Régiment d'Aulone saluting him.

While I was in my little room at the Recollettes', preparing to pack my few belongings and go with Nicole to the Château, a nun came to me and said that our Governor was in the visitors' room and desired to see me immediately.

I left Nicole and ran downstairs; and there was Monsieur de Frontenac in his brilliant uniform and muddy boots, standing alone in the visitors' room.

When I entered he saluted me and closed the door.

"Madame," said he bluntly, "the Aulones never dread the truth because they deal in it only. I never heard of a coward among them, either."

"Nor I, Monsieur."

"Very well. Then listen to the truth, Madame: I shall have no more than a thousand regulars to defend this city. The militia may not stand; the peasants and the Indians are of very small value. Hurons and Ottawas are likely to run; the sound of cannon makes them sick.

"Well, then"—he came and took my hands and looked me straight in the eyes—"help France in this hour, Madame! I ask it."

"Oh, Monsieur de Frontenac, tell me how in God's name I can do the humblest service for France and for you. . . ."

"Sit there at that table. Write to your father to bring his *coureurs-de-bois* to our aid. Tell him that the Gov-

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ernor who swore to catch him and shoot him needs him in this hour. Tell him that his King, who offers a price for his head, asks him to help us save Quebec to advance.

"Madame, with the *coureurs-de-bois* under my command I undertake to hold this Rock!

"Say that to Monsieur the Comte d'Aulone.

"Will you do this for me, Madame?"

I flew to the table where was ink, quill, and a ream of paper; and I wrote to my father to come with every forest-runner he could discover.

The Governor took my letter, read it, went to the door and called to an officer:

"Make copies and send them by different routes, using the swiftest messengers."

I went to the door and walked with Monsieur de Frontenac to the gate where were horsemen. He kissed my hand, reminded me that I was to go to the Château, got into his saddle.

As he gathered bridle he leaned over and said to me: "I think the Régiment d'Aulone will fight more gaily when they hear that their old *maître-de-camp* is in battle beside them."

Then he took off his brightly plumed hat to me, wheeled his horse and galloped back into the city, followed by his reckless, laughing youngsters.

CHAPTER XXXVI

WE had been installed in the citadel nearly two days and the Governor had not yet come near us. We heard that he neither ate nor slept, but was on the fortifications every moment of the day and night, planning, directing, encouraging laggards and faint-hearted, scolding the strong, planting a battery here, a barricade there, mustering the armed peasantry, haranguing militia, distributing the Regiments of Aulone and Carignan among the more dangerous posts, making speeches to the Indians of Lorette, to the Hurons, Algonquins, Abanakis, and warning the Ottawas and Nipissings that he would hold them to their treaty or forever abandon them to the certain and awful vengeance of the Iroquois.

They had brandished their hatchets and shouted: "We remain faithful to you, Onontio!"—but Madame d'Aloste told me that they were not to be relied upon.

From the railed balcony of the Château St. Louis we could see everything. The St. Lawrence spread away before us from the Point of Orleans to the *côtes* above; we could look down upon distant Beauport and the *côtes* beyond, and see our scout boats sailing off shore; we could see our sentinels on the summit of the Rock, but there were no cannon there; we could look straight down upon the roofs of the Lower Town below us.

There were scarcely any servants in the Château, all being called to the ramparts to lay sod, plant stockades, carry a gun, or serve a cannon.

Nicole and I cooked and slept in a tiny apartment by

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ourselves. Madame d'Aloste and her nuns were below, and always moving between their little convent and the Fortress.

On the sixteenth of October, about nine in the evening, there was considerable commotion in the Fortress and on the parade; and Nicole came to inform me that the Governor had arrived and entered his apartments and had gone to bed. Mary Mother, it was time! For he had scarce been out of his saddle since he left the canoe that brought him from Montreal.

We went to bed. I do not know how long I had been sleeping when I awoke with a breathless sense of my lover's presence near me.

But I dreamed of him nearly every night and, sitting up in my bed, supposed it was no more than that.

The rain which had begun to fall toward sunset had ceased. Out of my window I noticed a few stars in a frosty sky, and saw moonlight flooding my window and the balcony outside.

In these awakenings—which happened every night—I was accustomed to get out of bed, kneel down, and say a prayer for milord's bodily and spiritual salvation. After which I slept again.

I did this now, shivering, because the air had turned very cold. Also I trembled because the breathless sense of my lover's bodily presence continued to possess my mind and distract my thoughts and invade my prayer, breaking the thread of it again and again.

I ended, at last, and got me to bed; but could not sleep. So for an hour or more I lay looking at the moonlight; and every now and again a quiver of that same nervous excitement passed over my limbs and body.

I heard the measured tread of the sentry on the balcony outside; I heard the soft breathing of Nicole upon her

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couch at my bed's foot; I heard my own heart hurrying in my breast as though urging me to something, I knew not what.

I got out of my bed again, put on stockings, shoes, and the shepherd's cloak which milord gave me—and to which I always touched my lips as I drew it around my neck.

My friend, the sentry, seemed astonished to see me come out upon the balcony and told me that it was not yet dawn.

"Is all quiet?" I asked.

"Yes, Madame."

I walked to the railing, looked at the sky, then down the dark valley of the river from whence should come the lagging dawn.

There were stars there, also. They seemed strangely low and bright. I counted three; three?—no four!—no, there were eight stars there, all very low over the unseen river—Mary Mother, what was happening that these stars seemed to be slowly moving through the night!

I called softly to the sentry who was turning the western angle of the balcony. He turned and came back, and I showed him the moving stars.

No sooner did he see them than he cocked his piece, drew it to his shoulder and fired into the air.

Instantly from the rampart another shot replied; a red glow grew into a column of fire upon the summit of Diamond Rock; there came a blinding flash and the shattering detonation of a cannon from the Saut battery; the Windmill battery answered with a flare and a roar that shook the Château.

Now on the ramparts the racket of drums burst out; a trumpet sounded from the stables; the dark city around us awoke to the gallop of horses and hoarse shouting in street and square.

I went into my room where Nicole was already dress-

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ing. We helped each other; and, to her frightened question:

"Yes," said I, "one can see the lights on the English fleet moving slowly around Orleans Point."

Before we had finished dressing, the balcony outside resounded with the spurred boots of officers crowding there with their sea-glasses to make out the English ships.

It was not yet dawn, but the streets of Quebec were in a tumult and candles burned in every window.

As I opened our long window to step out to the balcony, I met Monsieur de Frontenac face to face.

"Ha!" said he gaily, "an Aulone can smell battle at a hundred leagues! I might have known who would first discover the enemy."

"Like the geese of Rome, Monsieur, women have their value in a beleaguered city," said I demurely.

"Yes," said he very seriously, "and if you will now cook for us a mouthful of breakfast you may demand what you will of me."

I called to Nicole who was trying to look through a spy-glass which an obliging and very young officer was holding for her. All the lower river, now, was sparkling with a swarm of moving lights which our Governor and his staff were observing through their glasses.

Nicole and I ran into our little kitchen, set the charcoal glowing, started the chocolate, and fell to cutting and buttering *tartines*.

There was a basket of eggs from the convent, and of these I made a great omelette, while Nicole ran down to the *Château cuisine* and came back with a dozen plates and as many knives, forks, and spoons. Two servants followed carrying a long table.

When we were ready I sent Nicole to inform Monsieur

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de Frontenac that he and his staff were served, and that the omelette would not be good if he delayed.

He came in with his grimly amused smile, followed by his young gentlemen; and Nicole and I waited upon them and refused to touch a morsel until they were satisfied.

Out of respect to the Governor General there was no conversation unless he addressed somebody, which he did occasionally—even me—saying that the omelette was delicious and that I might choose as my reward any English prisoner taken and remove his scalp at my own convenience.

Everybody laughed, but the jest was grim and made me shudder secretly, for I had seen the Hurons in their hellish paint—and I knew my lover was with the enemy.

The Governor and his staff did not tarry long at table. When Nicole and I had eaten it was already sunrise. We went out to the balcony and saw the entire English fleet of thirty-four sail passing the Island of Orleans and standing up the river. A great sixty-gun ship led them, coming grandly on; three more great ships followed in line of battle. Behind these came large vessels of many kinds down to the armed fishing craft that frequent the Banks.

So far no shots had been fired on either side.

An officer told me that the English had tried to land troops at Francheville and Beauport and that our militia and Indians had driven them back with bloody losses—in one attempt slaying a whole boat-load with a single volley.

That was where my heart tightened and choked me; I thought of milord amid the bullets; I trembled for him whose face was set against this city. Mary Mother, how

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dismal was our plight who were deep in love and ranged in arms against each other!

Now, it being sunrise, the great white flag of France with its snowy field strewn with golden lilies was hoisted over Fort St. Louis.

Nicole, who had been below for provisions, told me that they had hung a picture of the Holy Family upon the spire of the cathedral as a prayer for Heavenly aid and to vex the Puritan gunners who were, after all, no different from Cromwell's old parliamentaries coming to destroy our altars and mock our God.

I watched the fleet gliding into the Basin of Quebec where, one by one, they let go their anchors a little below the city.

At every moment I expected to see a tongue of flame leap from the side of some great ship, and hear the first cannon shot of the impending battle. But hour followed hour and the dreaded thunder had not pealed though the decks of the ships were swarming with sailors and soldiers from stem to stern.

About ten o'clock, through our glasses, we saw a boat leave the flagship of Admiral Sir William Phips. It carried a flag of truce.

Four canoes left the Lower Town to meet it.

Into one of these, from his boat, stepped an English officer; and our Governor sent Major Prévost and two sergeants to the quay to receive him and have him blindfolded.

Monsieur de Frontenac now descended to the great salon below, and all his staff followed him. I was dying with curiosity to go, and ventured to ask Monsieur de Longueuil if I might venture to follow. Whereupon all those young scamps encouraged me to accompany them,

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saying that my omelette had given me the *grande entrée* everywhere.

So I went with them in my gray wool gown—a strange and dingy figure amid all that glitter of gold and silver lace and swords and spurs and plumes.

I do not know whether Monsieur de Frontenac noticed me. If he did he paid me no attention.

Monsieur de Maricourt arrived, controlling his amusement with difficulty, and reported that they had blindfolded the English officer and were leading him all over the city to confuse him and give him vast ideas of the size of the place and the number of its troops and people.

We waited for half an hour, all standing, before they brought us the Englishman and removed the bandage from his eyes.

He seemed confused and astonished, and looked around the beautiful, gilded room, and at the brilliant company all powdered and scented and gold-laced and fluttering with ribbons and plumes.

He was a young subaltern, still out of breath, dazzled, confused; but he bore himself with charming dignity, bowed to our Governor, and expressed a polite wish that the duty assigned him had been of a more agreeable nature.

He then handed a letter to our Governor. An interpreter had been forgotten. I whispered to Monsieur de Sainte-Hélène that I understood English. He ventured to mention this to Monsieur de Frontenac who already had despatched an officer to bring one.

The Governor's eyes sparkled, but his mouth was leonine as he handed me the letter from the Puritan Admiral.

I was nervous, but my voice became steadier as I read

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it aloud, translating into French without any trouble at all.

It was a pompous, bragging, and threatening letter, very tiresome, very insolent; and it demanded the surrender of the city and fortress and garrison, and ended thus, as nearly as I can now remember :

“—Which, if you refuse, I am resolved by the help of God to revenge all wrongs and injuries, and bring you under subjection to the Crown of England, when, too late, you will wish that you had accepted the favour of surrender that I now extend to you.

“Your answer positive in an hour—returned by your own trumpet—is required upon your peril of which I, the aforesaid William Phips, Knight, do warn you!”

My face was burning with shame that I should read to any Frenchman so impudent a letter.

As I finished, the English officer drew his watch from his pocket and offered it to our Governor.

“It is ten o’clock, Monsieur,” he said, “and my Admiral must have your answer by eleven.”

Such an outrageous insult was too much for our young officers who could contain themselves no longer in spite of the presence of the Governor General.

In the midst of increasing indignation, Monsieur de Valrenne, white with passion, told the Englishman that he ought to be hanged for bringing such a message, and that his Admiral was a pirate and nothing better.

I looked at the Governor, beginning to be frightened, and saw the rage in his face. For a time he did not trust himself to speak; but when his temper was under control he said very quietly to the Englishman:

“I will not keep you waiting as long as a whole hour, Monsieur. Tell your Admiral, or General, or whatever he may be, that, even were I inclined to surrender, I would

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not trust a man who broke his word to the Governor of Port Royal. . . .”

“And stole his wigs,” muttered Maricourt; and I near died of laughter; and saw the Governor hide his mouth with his gloved hand.

The messenger stared at us in a startled manner.

“Sir,” said he, “is that an answer to a summons?”

“And a very good one,” replied the Governor, smiling.

“But, Monsieur de Frontenac, I must beg you to give me this answer in writing—”

The blaze in Frontenac’s eyes silenced him.

“Tell your General,” he said, “that I will answer him through the mouths of my cannon, and teach him that a man such as I am, is not to be summoned after this fashion!”

He nodded curtly to the two sergeants who immediately blindfolded the Englishman and led him away without further ceremony.

CHAPTER XXXVII

ALL that day the English fleet lay quiet at their moorings, and the Puritan Admiral who said he had only an hour to spare us seemed to require many to make up his mind to fire upon us.

Our Governor was busy in the Lower Town replanting and strengthening his batteries along the quay. An aid who came back to the Palace to get him a fresh handkerchief and another pair of doe-skin gauntlets, told us that Monsieur de Frontenac was very merry about his business of the eighteen-pounders, humming a lively air as he sighted every gun himself, and promising ten crowns to the first gunner who knocked a hole in the Admiral's flagship.

About five o'clock, when it was nearly sundown, Monsieur the Governor came himself and mounted to the balcony to take a look at Sir Phips, as he called him.

I had made a pot of broth and I filled a cup with this and buttered a *brioche* and carried them out to Frontenac.

"*Hé!*" said he, looking at the broth and then at me, "you seem to know everything, but how did you know I was hungry?"

"Monsieur, my father was a soldier, too."

While he ate his soup and brioche he tried to keep one eye glued to his telescope which stood on three legs before his chair.

"My child," said he, "it is the man in a hurry who goes slowest. Sir Phips takes all day to recover his breath which my reply seems to have taken away, and now the sunset and the tide are against him."

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I took the Governor's cup and refilled it. Poor gentleman, he was both cold and hungry, and a man of seventy needs to spare himself.

As long as daylight lasted he would not leave his telescope; and, as he had no cloak, I brought out my shepherd's wrap and threw it over his shoulders.

"That is kind of you," he said. "I forget such things when admiring Sir Phips." He finished his broth, got up, and insisted upon carrying the cup and plate into my bedroom, where Nicole had now lighted candles.

He looked around with an absent air, blinked like a lion in the candle light, then, turning abruptly to me:

"Do you think the Count your father will bring me his *coureurs-de-bois*? Or have I mortally offended him?"

"Monsieur, he will come."

Frontenac stood thinking, his hands clasped behind him, his narrowing eyes remote. Presently he said: "I was very short with Sir Phips. But I am shorter of men. And I am frank to say to you, Madame, that unless the Governor of Montreal and Monsieur d'Aulone arrive tonight with their regulars and *coureurs-de-bois*, the army of Sir Phips may take this city by storm tomorrow. . . ."

A tremendous outburst of drums drowned his voice; we heard a roar of voices from the ramparts; loud cheering; shouts of "*Vive Callières! Vive l'armée! Vive les coureurs-de-bois!*"

"*Ma foi*," said Frontenac coolly, "it seems that they are already arriving, and Sir Phips has dawdled too long!"

There was a tremendous uproar going on at the Western Gate and along St. Louis Street. The staff officers on the balcony outside came to beat upon my window, crying, "Monsieur le Comte! Monsieur le Comte! Callières is entering the Western Gate with his regulars and the *coureurs-de-bois*!"

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I ran to the long window and flung it open; and the great wave of noise rushed in—a confusion of drums and singing and cheering, above which the wild whooping of the forest-runners could be heard.

The Count, surrounded by his exulting officers, descended to the court where they all got onto their horses. I, frantic with excitement at thought of seeing my father, ran downstairs and out of the Fortress gates to St. Louis Street which was all lighted by the torches. I saw officers, carrying naked swords, riding at the head of their weary regulars, smiling right and left at the yelling crowd through which they forced a passage; I saw the famous *coureurs-de-bois* in their leather dress, tossing fringes and savage finery, swinging along, singing, whooping, tossing up their hatchets and guns in the torchlight—hard, sinewy, reckless fellows, swarthy from sunburn, and with the noiseless, moccasined stride of panthers.

At sight of these outlaws the people went wild; and the forest-runners laughed back at them, waving their weapons, blowing kisses at every girl they saw, draining the cans of cider and wine that were thrust out at them from the throng.

Many of them were young and handsome; many, indeed, came from the nobility, driven by unemployment and poverty to make a living for themselves in the vast, free forests which the King said belonged to him. And he had made a law that all who entered the forests, except by his permission, were outlaws and were to be killed like wolves wherever found.

As these wild, reckless-eyed, hardy fellows passed through St. Louis Street, four abreast, I scanned each weather-darkened face in search of my father's features. I did not see him; and, fearing I had missed him, ran across to the Place d'Armes where Frontenac, sitting his

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horse, was reviewing them with a grim and gleaming visage.

I was making my way among the restless horses of his officers, and had nearly reached the Governor's stirrup, when I felt myself seized by a horseman and swung up into his saddle. And the next instant I was in my father's arms.

Well, we had time for a long embrace, a few tender, broken words; no more. For in the imminence of an attack at dawn there was no time to be lost; and already the long column of the forest-runners was descending by the cliffs of Sainte Geneviève to the Intendant's Palace where they were to be quartered.

All this time Nicole had followed me—I had not known it—and now she came to kiss my father's hand; and he bent over from his saddle and gave her two hearty kisses on her pretty cheeks.

Frontenac already had started; there came a trample of horses in the torchlight, a last cheer, and my father was gone.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

A GAIN I rested badly; the overpowering sense of my lover's nearness to me banished sleep; nor did prayer at dead of night bring either spiritual reassurance or bodily tranquillity.

All that Monday night the wind blew hard, filling the gusty chimneys with melancholy sounds like the stealthy whining of viewless things.

Just before dawn it rained very hard and my roof began to leak, and very soon the floor had puddles and my bed was wet. But it could not be helped, so I put on my shepherd's cloak and tried to sleep. I could see the shadowy sentry on the balcony outside, flattening himself against my window and trying to peer down into the black gulf, beneath which lay the river and the unseen ships of war.

The storm had ceased; there was a watery light in the east, and a great wind blowing when I closed my eyes and slept.

It was late on Tuesday afternoon when I awoke and sat up sleepily in my bed; and saw my father seated at my bedside.

Into his arms I fell and hid my face among the soft fringes on his deer-skin doublet; and there I nestled and whimpered and yawned and murmured endearing things while he pressed me close and kissed my tangled curls.

So cradled, and as a father relates a magic legend to a child, he told me of his escape through Holland; of the endless voyage to Hispanola; of the pirate sloop that carried him to New York; of his painful journey by Albany and Saint Sacrement and the Richelieu to Cadaraqui where

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at last he had found sanctuary from the wrath of Kings.

Then, in my turn, I told him everything, and how it had gone with me since that first and only night in the fairyland of Versailles.

I told him everything except Gribouri's name—not sparing myself—all that had happened at the Recollettes', in London, in Dieppe, aboard the *Duchess of Burgundy*, and here in Quebec.

Every secret of my inmost heart and soul I laid bare for my father; and led him with me through those two years of grief and fears and heart-rent happiness.

I told him that I loved; and whom, naming milord; and how I had loved him. I told him how and why and when I had renounced him; and at what cost; and what I had become. Only one thing I would not tell, and that was Gribouri's name and station.

For that I had married this man, nobody knew in Quebec excepting only our servants, a poor priest, and a ragged notary whose very names I had forgotten. And if Colin and Nicole knew that I was married they did not know who was the man.

Only the servants at the Intendancy and Madame d'Alosté could suspect that; and the Lady Superior had promised secrecy.

So, through me, there could be no punishment for the man who had forced me to submit and who had brutalized and crowded me backward to the very verge of death itself.

My father sat cradling me in his strong arms, with never a word of reproach or any anger, or of any threat concerning the man whose heartlessness had crushed and fettered me for life.

No. All he said was, "There, there, Roussette! There, my darling. All is safe and well, now. All is secure from

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harm in Father's arms. . . . And when we drive the English back to Boston, then you and I shall go away together where there are no edicts, no kings save God alone: where there is a clean, new world of pleasant lands, well-watered meadows and noble rivers and all of delight that was in Eden before the snake."

I began to cry; but he lifted me out of bed and, cradling me, walked to and fro with me to hush and comfort.

I asked him how it had gone between him and Frontenac; and he laughed and said: "There is a *man*!"

"Truly he is," said I, "and God forbid any quarrel ever between you two."

"It lies with him," said my father.

I told him about the English trumpet; and he laughed and laughed. Then I asked him if he had encountered any from the Régiment d'Aulone.

"Yes, Bevis. The boy wept. But he is the only Captain left from the old command."

"And the men?"

"Colin came blubbering," he said, smiling; "and when our *coureurs-de-bois* passed in the Western Gate, where a company of Aulone stood guard, the men knew me and old Boufflon, and the damned rascals broke rank to kiss my hand. . . ." He laughed and laughed, but I saw tears in his eyes. "The damned, undisciplined rascals," he repeated, "—and I would have given them a sound scolding had I found proper military words. But two years in the forest!—well, one forgets, Roussette. . . ."

"Sergeant Boufflon is with you?" I asked.

"Oh, yes; we made our Calvary together from Versailles that night. He will be with us when this trouble is ended, and when you and I depart together."

"Is the English fleet still anchored in the river?"

"Pitching and rolling at their moorings. Wave, tide,

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and wind are against them. There was fighting below Beauport this morning where one of their sloops got aground in the mud at low tide; but they fought like devils, those Boston men, and our scouts dared not wade out to carry her by the Board, and she floated at the tide's turning."

"Why did they not dare carry her by assault?" I asked.

"I do not know. There was a certain *Sieur Gribouri* in command of our sharpshooters, who seemed to have no stomach for so desperate a venture."

After a silence: "I shall dress me and call *Nicole* to fetch us chocolate."

He set me down upon the bed; pulled out his watch. He had time for a tartine, he said.

When I was dressed he returned from the windy balcony, and *Nicole* brought us breakfast.

My father's forest-runners were quartered in the Intendancy where, at the ford, and the crossing above, the first shock must come from the enemy infantry. Here, and around toward the rear only, could an assault be made upon *Sainte Geneviève*; and below these barricades my father's forest-runners were posted to break the storm when it burst across the *St. Charles*.

Well, my father ate, took gay leave of me, and went away—truly a strange yet splendid figure in his moccasins and gaudy buckskins, and the furry cap of otter with the tail twitching behind at every stride.

I went out on the balcony to look down at the English ships where they rolled and wallowed and rose and fell at their moorings.

I could see the tiny figures of men on deck, moving about in no haste. Clearly *Sir William Phips* could do nothing in such waves and with so violent a wind which came in sudden squalls across the Basin.

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So all that Tuesday the fleet lay tossing below the Fortress; and our city remained as silent as the ships save for the bells which always were sounding in some convent or monastery or seminary on the Rock.

Night came; but Frontenac did not appear, apparently disdaining to trouble himself to notice the fleet. An officer told Nicole that he was dining at the Intendancy with the Comte d'Aulone and Monsieur de Champigny, and that all seemed to go very merrily, judging from the frequent shouts of laughter.

I had slept late, yet, when dark came, I got me again to bed; and I awakened only twice to prayer that night when thought of milord unclosed my eyes in darkness.

It was nearly eleven o'clock, and Wednesday morning, when I started upright among my pillows, and heard the English fifes and drums for the first time. All the air was filled with a tremendous noise from the river below; heavy cheering arose from ship after ship; the sound of the fifes and drums redoubled in volume; and for a whole hour the martial tumult and hurraing never ceased for an instant.

I lost no time in dressing and in swallowing my chocolate.

When I went out to the balcony, the Governor and a crowd of officers were already there, all watching a swarm of boats loaded with soldiers, which were putting off from the ships and rowing toward Beauport shore.

With a glass, which Monsieur de Maricourt very obligingly held balanced for me, I could plainly see the soldiers sitting in the boats with their guns between their gaitered legs.

I could see, too, that the tide was out and that boat after boat ran into the mud and stuck there.

I heard Sainte-Hélène say to his brother, Maricourt:

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"That fool Gribouri—why does he not pepper them now?"

But not a shot came from Beauport, and the Boston infantry began to jump out of their boats and wade through the shallow water toward shore.

Frontenac watched them through his long telescope, a low, leonine rumbling in his throat—which Monsieur de Sainte-Hélène seemed to comprehend, for he ran down to the courtyard; and I heard the clatter of his departing horse.

All along the Beauport strand, now, we could see a thousand Puritan infantry swarming, forming into companies, their drummers and fifers marching up and down, while more boats came rapidly rowing shoreward only to run aground and there vomit out more soldiers.

Suddenly a distant crackling sound came to our ears like thorns burning under a cauldron.

"Ha!" said Frontenac, "Monsieur de Sainte-Hélène's sharpshooters are in action!"

From where I stood I saw men falling; I saw the Puritan officers running hither and thither, pulling and pushing their men into some sort of line. This long, disorderly line began to move toward the smoke that now veiled the thickets along the slope which rose from the shore to the inland woods.

The Boston infantry were now beginning to run in our direction, their officers ahead, their drums beating a charge.

I heard two heavy volleys from our sharpshooters and saw the woods belted with smoke. Into it rushed the enemy infantry, and, all in a few moments, not an Englishman remained on the strand excepting those tiny dots on the shore. Some moved; others never stirred.

With heart beating heavily I was watching the English sailors wading ashore to carry the wounded and dead

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to the boats, when, suddenly, Monsieur de Frontenac stood up and called out to Maricourt:

"Sir Phips is leaving his moorings! Go to the Saut battery and give his flagship my compliments!"

Maricourt hastened away, laughing to himself. Frontenac's features were lighted by a kind of infernal brilliancy, and he made low, contented, lion sounds under his little stiff mustache.

We waited—one minute, two, three—watching the slowly moving English ships taking position abreast of the Rock.

They had neither anchored nor fired a single gun when all at once a clap of thunder shook our balcony, and a white cloud rose in silvery foliations from the battery of the Saut-au-Matelot.

At that all the sky and earth seemed to fall into one common crash as the fleet let go every gun that bore upon us; and every battery we had replied. Thunder rolled, reverberating from height to height; the Rock flashed and steamed; vast volumes of smoke enveloped the ships through which red lightning played.

There were no longer intervals between the broadsides from ship and Rock than between the two ticks of a clock. Discharge followed discharge, rocking the earth till the Château shook and trembled and swayed without ceasing.

Monsieur de Frontenac was walking carelessly to and fro, his glass under his arm, noticing the ships less than the Beauport woods where, over the trees, smoke rose everywhere, indicating the combat that was going on among the rocks and thickets.

Now and then he sent an officer away upon some duty.

At first I was almost stupefied by all this din, and stood with both hands closing my ears and staring wildly

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at the ships. But, by degrees, I became accustomed to it; the ships did not seem to be doing us any damage; and now and then an officer came back to report that the English artillery was light, and the cannon balls were striking the solid face of the cliffs.

About one o'clock Nicole and I made soup for the Governor and his officers. Frontenac came into my chamber to eat his.

He gave me a sort of contented grin where he stood with a bowl of broth in one hand and a *brioche* in the other.

"Well," said he, "I hope the music is not too noisy for you, Madame."

"As long as Sir William dances to it, why, it suits me, my General."

"No, he has not yet begun to dance his jig. Not yet. The real dance, for Sir Phips, begins tomorrow. . . ." He turned around to hear a report from Beauport which a panting officer of scouts brought in.

"Admirable," said Frontenac in a purring voice. "Tell Monsieur de Sainte-Hélène to amuse the Boston infantry with his Lorette Indians, but nowhere to stand a charge. . . . Slip away; avoid contact; recede slowly, cleverly. What I desire is to delay the enemy until it is too late in the day to cross the St. Charles by boat. . . . Let him camp on the bank. Monsieur d'Aulone knows what to do in the morning. You see?—the English cannot pass the ford at high tide; and he will not dare try it by boat after dark. That's the idea. . . . And tell my dear Monsieur de Sainte-Hélène that he can count absolutely upon Monsieur d'Aulone to take over that affair in the morning. . . . I want Monsieur de Sainte-Hélène to command the batteries in the Lower Town. . . . At sunrise I wish him to knock several large holes in the

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flagship—and in the vanity of our friend Sir Phips. You will say so to Monsieur de Sainte-Hélène.”

The scout went away laughing.

However, another messenger came from Beauport to say that we had lost the Chevalier de Clermont and the veteran Captain de St. Denis, and a number of militia and scouts.

“All dead?”

“All, my General.”

“Oh. Well, there is no more agreeable way to die. . . . I shall miss these friends. . . . But—I am seventy, and with God’s mercy shall again clasp their hands at no distant day. . . . Tell them to carry the dead to the Intendancy. . . . The law courts—where already there are so many dead minds. . . . Tell Monsieur de Bienville to take over Clermont’s scouts. . . . He is to be adroit enough to force the English to encamp at sunset. That is all.”

He ate his soup, thoughtfully. I was thinking of poor Clermont who was so gay yesterday. . . .

We said nothing; the steady cannonade continued to shake the Château; officers came and left; Monsieur de Frontenac ate his dinner standing.

And that is all that happened during the entire afternoon.

At sunset the cannonade which had rocked the city all day long ceased. The sudden silence seemed terrible, as though ominous of some vast disaster instantly impending.

I know not why I should have felt so exhausted. I lay down on my bed, not undressing.

Nicole, who had been out in the town, returned to say that scarcely any damage had been done us. An officer had assured her that twenty crowns would pay for the repairs.

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Also, she had learned that the *coureurs-de-bois* had not been in action; that the Boston army now lay encamped along the St. Charles; that the nuns were caring for our few wounded; and that the enemy had lost heavily in Beauport woods.

After sunset I put on my cloak and went by Sainte Geneviève to the Palace of the Intendant, to visit my father; but he made me go back immediately and told me not to come there again.

There was considerable firing going on along the St. Charles, our advanced posts exchanging shots with the enemy's; and I suppose that was the reason my father hustled me back to the Upper Town.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE Château roof leaked very badly. It was rain water dropping upon my face that finally awakened me. The room was shaking with the cannonade. I had slept restlessly, being troubled by frightful dreams. When the new leak in the roof awakened me, I realized that I was feeling quite ill. My eyes pained me; my face and body were hot; my bones ached, and I coughed continually.

However, I crept out of bed and dressed me, and went out onto the balcony where Monsieur de Frontenac stood with his telescope; and all the officers seemed very intent upon the ships below, which our two batteries in the Lower Town had been firing upon since sunrise. Yet I had slept through the cannonade. Nicole said the English ships were terribly battered. I saw that one great ship had already abandoned the battle. She seemed to be on fire, and lay far out in the stream beyond cannon shot, her splintered rigging and gaping sides swarming with sailors while boats plied about her like scared chickens around a dying hen.

The Admiral's ship, also, seemed to be a dreadful wreck, although her guns still fired at us. But they told me that her main mast and mizzen were ruined; her quarter-deck, cabin, and hull riddled and torn; her great flag, with its cross of St. George, shot away; and she must sink very soon unless hauled off beyond harm from our guns.

Even as I listened to the officer who explained this, I heard Frontenac say very coolly: "Sir Phips has cut his cables. He's adrift. Gentlemen, observe the beginning of the end of Monsieur Phips!"

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An officer whispered to me that the English flag had been shorn from *The Six Friends* by a cannon ball from one of the quay batteries; and that our scouts had secured the flag, and that it now hung a-drying in the Château kitchen below.

Also I learned that the Boston army had remained in their muddy and dismal camp, skirmishing around Beauport with our coureurs-de-bois and Lorette Indians who stung them like hornets from the rocks and gave them no peace by day or night.

As I stood shivering, my whole body cold and hot by turns, watching the crippled ships withdrawing one by one beyond our cannon range, Monsieur de Frontenac turned on his spurred heel, drily remarking that Sir Phips had now danced his English jig and would never desire to dance another to any Canadian music.

Noticing me huddled up near the recess of my open window, he saluted me very gallantly and came to kiss my feverish hand.

"What's this!" said he, sharply; "your hand is burning up like Sir Phips' quarter-deck!"

He gave me a penetrating look: "You have taken a chill," said he.

"It will pass, my General. . . ."

"*Hé!* Well, then, as you admit that I really am your General, I order you to bed. You understand what an order means, Madame?"

I smiled faintly and curtseyed. However, I was quite ready to get into my bed again, for I really felt ill.

The weather had become intensely cold; and Nicole told me there was an inch of ice in the water-pails on the balcony, which are kept there in case of fire.

I know not what exactly was the nature of my malady;

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I had dull pains all over me, and a sore throat and fever. In the beginning they feared smallpox—the New England army having many sick of it—but a Recollette nun who came to see me told Nicole it was a kind of rheum which those who are lately come from Old France are likely to contract during the first approach of winter; and that, unless cared for, an inflammation of the lungs might follow which very often proved fatal.

So they rolled me in blankets and laid hot bricks in my bed, and gave me *tisane* and hot brandy with maple sugar, and other strange medicines, all day long, until, having vomited, and now being thoroughly intoxicated, I fell into a stupor.

I think, at times, my medicine and the fever made me light-headed; yet I can recollect hearing the Recollette nun tell Nicole that poor Monsieur de Sainte-Hélène had been killed; and that the Chevalier de Longueuil, one of his brothers, had been wounded in the fighting on the St. Charles.

Also I can remember asking for news of my father, and of being told that he and his forest-runners had crossed the river and were in battle with the New England infantry; and that Frontenac himself, with three battalions of Aulone, had marched to their support.

Somehow, in my illness, I must have missed a whole day; for I recollect nothing concerning the fierce fighting at Beauport on Saturday in the rain. It was Sunday that I next remember, and how the icy wind blew and screamed in the chimneys and beat like heavy, unseen hands striking against my shaking window.

But I was feeling much better. Once or twice I noticed, as I lay there, that Nicole had been weeping. I asked her if any harm had come to Colin, and she said no, but that yesterday our rascally soldiery had had the im-

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pertinence to take up a position behind her little farmhouse.

"Which no doubt has ruined us," she whimpered, "and I am thinking of the expense we shall be at every instant."

I sat up in bed, wet with perspiration, and rather weak. But I felt much better, and laughed at Nicole and told her she was a real Normandy girl who, instead of blessing God for Colin's safety and the security of her cattle at Cap Rouge, preferred to whine about the value of a few window-panes and a hole or two in a barn.

This made her smile again. But there is in every Normandy woman and man an ingrained avarice that plagues them, and leaves them unconsoled if even a crooked pin be missing in the house.

My beloved Nicole who would lay down her life for me! And bargain all day over a carrot! May God's Mother bless her with many children—and many cabbages and bushels of yellow wheat!

I got up and made Nicole bathe and dress me; and went to the balcony to look across at Beauport where my father was.

I could hear distant shots in the woods where our sharpshooters were firing at the boats of the English fleet, and I could see the powder smoke whirl up over the tops of the naked trees.

Nicole fetched me a bowl of hot broth with wine in it; and when I had finished it I felt *très bien plantée sur mes jambes*. Also very restless from long confinement to my balcony. So I borrowed Nicole's hooded cap of heavy gray felt and put on her pattens and wool mittens, and went down to the parade which was full of muddy, weary soldiers returned from the *côtes* de Beauport and Beau-pré.

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Outside, in the city, the streets were crowded with soldiers and citizens surging this way and that, some crying out that the English fleet had been beaten off and ruined; others bewailing damage done in the Lower Town, and saying that the Boston army was still fighting below Beauport.

Through this confusion and din I pressed, meeting everywhere troops of almost every arm returning from the St. Charles or hastening thither. Nobody could tell me where were the *coureurs-de-bois*; and, as I saw none, I supposed they were skirmishing beyond the St. Charles with the English boats.

On the cliffs of Sainte Geneviève was a vast crowd of people looking down toward the ford; and I saw Indians down there and a swaying throng of armed peasants and horsemen, and could hear the excited roar of voices from below.

"What is it?" I asked a young girl who was coming up from below, and who looked pale and frightened.

"The English prisoners," she said, "—and they have delivered one of them to our Indians."

"What for?" I demanded.

"My God—what do Indians do with prisoners—?" She made a gesture of horror and hurried on.

I started down the steep way; a soldier called to me to stop, but I ran past him, and over the barricade, and descended the slope to the river.

"What is all this about the English prisoners?" I asked a militia-man who was standing on tip-toe to see over the heads of the crowd.

"Faith," said he, "the new Sub-Intendant Gribouri has delivered an Englishman to the Hurons to burn; but our own Indians say he belongs to them and they wish to burn him at Lorette."

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"Does the Governor know this?" I demanded.

"The Governor is in the Lower Town—"

I set elbows and shoulders to the people in front of me and forced my way through them to the front where some horsemen sat looking down from their saddles upon a dozen hideously painted, half-naked savages who were wrangling and disputing and pulling a white man about among them.

A St. Francis Indian, all daubed white and scarlet, and carrying a gun and a hatchet, came out of the struggling knot of savages and began to harangue a horseman in a language of which I understood not a word. The horseman was Gribouri.

Then, to my astonishment and horror, I saw Gribouri push his horse forward into the crowd of savages, forcing a path for himself to the white man whom they were pulling hither and thither.

"This prisoner was delivered to the Indians of the Lorette Mission!" he said in a loud voice. "The St. Francis chief has nothing to do with this business, nor have the Hurons of the Upper Lakes. Now, then—you, there, take away your prisoner!"

There was a terrible silence; then one of the horsemen said in a quiet but distinct voice: "All the same, we should not permit them to burn a white man."

Gribouri shrugged his shoulders, saying that it was not his affair to interfere with the customs of our allies.

At the same moment two tall, painted warriors elbowed their way out of the sullen circle of naked savages, pulling along between them a white prisoner whose arms were tied behind him.

The prisoner was milord.

He looked up at the horsemen as he passed; and they gazed at him in silence.

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I heard milord say very quietly: "Can you do nothing, gentlemen?"

"I would if I could," said the same soldier who had spoken before. "It is shameful to let a white man die by fire."

"Hold your tongue!" cried Gribouri, spurring up to the riders and glaring at the cavalryman who had spoken; "—another word and I order you a hundred blows with the lash! . . . Or—by God!—" he added, pulling a heavy whip from his right holster, "I'll punish you myself. . . ."

At that instant I stepped forward, snatched the whip from Gribouri's gloved hand, and with all my strength I lashed him across his face.

For a moment he reeled in his saddle, for the lash had blinded him, and he screamed with the pain of it, clinging to his stirrups while his frightened horse backed and danced and pirouetted, scattering the crowd into flight.

I ran to the young horseman who had spoken of mercy; "Ride to the Lower Town and tell Monsieur de Frontenac that Mademoiselle de Maniscamp needs him! Hasten, for God's sake. . . ."

He wheeled his horse and was already galloping down the shore when I turned and caught hold of milord's sleeve, and fell to lashing the Indians who held him, and with such a fury that they leaped away with howls of pain as the iron-tipped lash cut their naked flesh to ribbons.

Now, still clutching milord by the sleeve, and grasping the heavy whip, I faced Gribouri who had got out of his saddle and was advancing toward me, his loose mouth distorted with rage unutterable.

A terrible welt had laid his cheek open to the bone, and blood was running down it to his chin. I swung the ter-

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rible lash and warned him to stand or I would mark him with a brand that should outlast the King's *fleur-de-lis*.

In the uproar and jostling around me I heard milord begging somebody to untie his arms; but at that instant, and while I faced Gribouri with lifted lash, a violent movement of the crowd knocked me aside, and I saw a tall *coureur-de-bois* pass swiftly in front of me and strike Gribouri across the face with a leather mitten.

Instantly the roar of the throng ceased. In the midst of a breathless silence I heard my father's careless voice: "Monsieur, is it necessary that I repeat in words what my leather glove has already called to your attention?"

Gribouri's mouth, contorted with fury, recovered speech at last.

"When and where?" he managed to ask in a ghastly voice.

"Naturally, at your convenience, Monsieur. I shall go to the Saut-au-Matlot."

There was a devil's blaze in Gribouri's eyes as he said in a choked voice:

"I understand you, Monsieur." Then he took off his gaily plumed hat and bowed to my father who bowed to him, his cap of otter skin in his right hand.

Gribouri's visage was a mask of drying blood; he walked to his horse, got into the saddle, and put it to a canter, followed by his riders.

My father turned on his heel and came back to where I stood, clutching milord by the arm with desperate fingers.

He looked hard at milord; then very gravely upon me. Then he drew his hunting knife and cut the cord that tied milord's arms.

"Monsieur," he said, "are you the English naval officer

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taken last night while attempting to bring off the cannon abandoned by the Boston infantry at Beauport?"

"I am, sir," said milord, calmly.

"Are you prisoner to the sharpshooters of Monsieur Gribouri?"

"Monsieur de Champigny's horsemen took me."

"Is that the reason that the Sub-Intendant claims you?"

"I suppose so, Monsieur."

I said: "Father, the Sub-Intendant delivered milord to the Indians to be burned at Lorette."

At that milord looked up quickly at my father, knowing for the first time who he was.

All about us a multitude of people pressed around us and heads were thrust forward to hear what we were saying.

My father drew a whistle from his belt, blew it twice; and as he blew the third loud blast, everywhere through the crowd came coureurs-de-bois, shouldering their way to where we were standing.

"Take this English prisoner to Monsieur the Comte de Frontenac at the Château," said my father. "You need not tie him; he gives me his parole—do you not, sir?"

"Yes," said milord.

"That is sufficient."

Milord bowed to my father and to me and thanked us very quietly. Then, surrounded by forest-runners, he walked toward the cliffs of Sainte Geneviève.

My father gave me his hand and we followed slowly after the prisoner and his escort; and a vast crowd followed us.

What now was to happen I did not know. I had heard that the Quebec government never dared to interfere with prisoners taken by their Indian allies and destined for the fire. But the Intendant's troop of horse had taken

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milord prisoner. . . . Had anybody a right to deliver him to the Indians?

I asked my father what was to be done with milord, and he said that was for Monsieur de Frontenac to decide, and none other.

As we mounted the road to Sainte Geneviève I clasped my father's hand very tightly and clung to it; and I think he understood my terrors for he gave me a gay smile, telling me to keep a tranquil mind and a heart undaunted.

"You must fight Gribouri?" I whispered.

"Certainly."

"Yes—certainly." But I could scarcely utter the words.

When we came to the Château and entered the court, and at last were free of the curious crowd which had continually pressed about us, I begged my father to mount to my little lodging behind the balcony and there rest him until he heard from Gribouri.

"Yes," said he, "but go you first, Roussette, and I will come to you in a few moments. . . ." He called to a young ensign who was crossing the parade, dismissed me with a smile, and went to meet the subaltern who wore the uniform of Aulone.

I watched them enter the casemates in earnest conversation; then I went into the Château, and wearily to my lodging; and sat down on the bed's edge to await my father.

I waited more than half an hour before the first shaft of fear pierced my heart and brought me to my feet all trembling.

What instinct drove me to the balcony I can not guess; but no sooner had I stepped outside my chamber than it was as though some invisible finger were pointing to the cliff.

And there—oh, God!—far away against the sky I saw

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some people moving on the Rock; saw two distant figures detach themselves from the group, approach each other, and take their places on the cliff's sheer edge. And now, in silhouette, I saw them lift their arms and hold them level, extended toward each other. Suddenly I saw their swords.

Mary Mother, grant that I never again shall pass such moments, either in purgatory or on earth. They were so far away that I knew not which was which, only could see two supple, fighting shapes, black against the horizon, with now and then a spark and glint of steel running like lightning across the sky.

I know not how long I stood there clutching the railing and more dead than alive, while those two lithe, agile shapes fought on the black rock's edge, when, all at once, one of them stood stock still, then, reeling, stepped backward out into empty space.

The scream tore my throat for utterance; dumb, rigid, I strained my eyes to know who it was that stood there all alone.

It was useless; I could not tell; and now the three figures were clustered together and moving away among the rocks which already hid them from my view.

I went into my chamber and knelt down by my bed. And there awaited God's will and judgment. And after a long while I heard steps in the corridor and my father's careless, pleasant voice: "Roussette! May one come in, if you please?"

CHAPTER XL

NOW, in the city of Quebec there was a tremendous uproar and great disorder. The coureurs-de-bois and soldiers of the disbanded Carignan Regiment roamed the streets, shouting and singing and firing their guns to celebrate their victory over the Puritan soldiery.

Nobody could do anything with these wild fellows, who, like all irregulars, generally chose their own officers and obeyed them when they pleased.

There was much drunkenness, much fiddling and dancing and noisy carousing in the Lower Town; and all this reckless behaviour was going on under the guns of the English fleet which still lay in the stream, riddled, shattered, sullen and dangerous.

Everywhere the wildest stories were afloat, how our Lady of Quebec had appeared at the Windmill Battery—a white shape amid the whirling cannon smoke—and with her own delicate hands had loaded and fired a cannon in defense of the true faith and to the glory of the Most High.

More than two dozen cannon balls had fallen in the Ursulines' garden; and when they had cooled, the brave nuns lifted and carried them to the batteries, and our gunners, having spat upon them for luck, shot them back at the enemy ships while they chanted in chorus:

Ého, ého, ého!
Les Anglais vont aux plaines.

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Ého, ého, ého!

Et les loups sont aux bois!

The disorder in the streets was such that the Intendant's company of horse could neither subdue nor control it. The regulars of Aulone were in the forts or with our fiery Monsieur de Subercase below Beauport whither, already, some of the shattered ships were dropping down with the tide.

My father would not let me go into the streets where both citizens and irregulars were now entirely out of hand and where drunken bands of forest-runners and Indians yelled and capered and quarrelled all day and all night, so that even the Jesuit fathers were defied by the Praying Indians of Lorette.

Now and then our cannon still fired at the nearer English ships, but they made no attempt to resent the challenge. To me their smashed masts and rigging looked like the wreckage of giant spider-webs.

Monsieur de Frontenac continued in the Lower Town with Monsieur de Champigny and my father, strengthening the intrenchments from the Palace to the King's Stores, and adding more guns to the quay batteries.

Here, under my father's orders, were companies of forest-runners, boat-men, and scouts of the canoe service in reserve. And of these was Colin who acted as messenger for my father between the Palace and the Château.

It was on Tuesday morning, I think, that Colin came to me where I sat in my chamber with Nicole's hand in mine, thinking of milord who, with others, was in the Prison of the Intendancy.

My father sent me word that a trumpet had arrived from the Boston Admiral requesting an exchange of prisoners, to which Monsieur de Frontenac had agreed.

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Further, my father said that, as Monsieur de Frontenac had promised me an English prisoner, I should immediately make a choice among them and notify the Governor by letter within the hour.

I was so scared that I could scarcely steady my fingers to write:

Monsieur le Comte de Frontenac,

Monsieur—

As you were once good enough to promise me an English prisoner, I beg you will not exchange Monsieur le Capitaine de vesseau, Sir Harry Quarles, but very kindly place him at my disposition and accept the heartfelt gratitude of her who must ever remember you in her daily prayers.

MICHELLE DE MANISCAMP.

To my father I wrote:

Monsieur mon père:

I beg of you to go immediately to the Intendancy prison, while the English trumpet waits, and there lay before Sir Harry Quarles the true state of our military affairs in this city, and of Monsieur de Frontenac's purpose regarding the exchange of prisoners.

Be good enough to represent to milord that my inclination to listen to whatever he may be pleased to say to me has never changed since first I saw him at Whitehall. Circumstances, only, closed my ears to him.

Ask him, if you please, to be kind enough to notice that I never have told him anything except the truth, and have ever endeavoured to remain friendly to his interests, though apparently indifferent.

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You will, dear father, make such further representations to him concerning my rank and poverty as you may deem suitable and compatible with our modesty and dignity. And if he appear to be inclined to such an alliance between our two families, you may then assure him that it is my ardent inclination also, and the dearest desire of my heart which was his at our first encounter and never has belonged to anybody else.

I am, with every affectionate consideration of duty and respect,

Your devoted daughter,

MICHELLE.

Now my flying, trembling fingers were busy with a third message:

Milord,

My father, the Comte d'Aulone, will have the honour to call upon you at the Palace and deliver to you this letter. Which is but a line to beg you to remark the difference between childish indiscretion and mature evil; and to assure you that, through me, neither at the Spring Gardon nor in the Intendancy, nor anywhere else at any time, have the traditions of my race ever been sullied by me.

For this reason I do not hesitate to sign myself,

Your friend,

MICHELLE

Colin, who was embracing Nicole behind my back, came to take my letters and hasten to the Lower Town where the English trumpet waited to return to the fleet with our own trumpet as escort.

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I was so excited and restless that I could scarcely contain myself; joy and fear, passionate hope and dreadful doubt assailed me; and one moment I threw on my shepherd's cloak to pace the balcony, and the next I flung myself upon my bed to try to endure the dragging minutes.

About three o'clock I heard the drums on Fort St. Louis beating a parley; and the New England drums replied. Far and faint came their rattle across the water from the flagship. Then from the Lower Town a French trumpet spoke; and a distant English trumpet answered mournfully.

I ran to the balcony, and saw that all the English ships were in motion and sailing slowly down the river. One by one they passed the headland and disappeared behind the Island of Orleans, until, in the vast Basin below, not a single sail remained, and the great river stretched away, lonely and desolate, far as the eye could see.

What had happened I did not know; and my father had forbidden me the streets, and I would not send Nicole where I must not venture, so I had no news that day.

All night long I could hear the shouting, singing, and quarrelling in the streets where the forest-runners made too free with the peasant girls of Beaupré and Three Rivers; and Carignan resented it with fists and feet.

However, Monsieur de Frontenac had now had enough of it. The defeated ships had gone below to mend their battered hulks and rigging before setting sail for Boston and New York; Beauport was clear; the whole business had ended.

So our Governor took the Intendant's cavalry and the regulars and swept that city as clean of disorder as Nicole sweeps my little chamber.

And my father, Monsieur de Champigny and the Town Major did the rest. So that in the morning all noise and

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violence had ceased; nuns and Jesuits were in control of the crowds of refugees, the Ursulines began their Novena to the saints, the angels, and the souls in purgatory, incited by Laval and the Superior of the Jesuits.

In a solemn procession of priests, nuns, soldiers, and people the Puritan Admiral's captured flag was borne to the cathedral where the Bishop sang *Te Deum* and our batteries thundered and every bell in the city of Quebec rang wildly out to celebrate our victory and honour God.

Monsieur de Frontenac, whose feud with convent, monastery and seminary did not include the Recollet fathers, and who really entertained deep respect for religion when its votaries did not interfere with him, let Champigny and Callières flaunt their plumes and prayers as the two champions of the faith. As for himself, he continued busy with his regular infantry which was down the river watching Monsieur de Phips patch up his ships so that they might stagger home with his sick, bleeding, starving army.

On Wednesday morning he despatched a fourth battalion of Aulone across the St. Charles, and came to the Château to change his wet clothing and make his devotions by himself in the church of the Recollet fathers.

One of his young aids, an ensign, came to scratch politely on my door, offering the compliments of the Governor General, and begging my attendance in the great salon below.

And there, oh, Mary Mother, I beheld the Governor clad in glittering magnificence such as I had seen only at Versailles; and he was all alone in that gorgeously gilded salon, standing with bent head and his eyes fixed upon the polished floor.

When he saw me he bowed and very kindly and gal-

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lantly gave me his hand to lift me from my profound obeisance. However, he immediately pretended to ill humour, and began to complain aloud that I showed him little respect and consideration, and was playing the tyrant in Quebec and ordering everything to suit me regardless of his authority.

"My God," said he, "it appears that I may not dispose of my own prisoners until I consult your pleasure. Moreover, you pick out for yourself the only English prisoner of any value to me. What have you to reply to that, Madame!"

My heart bounded with utter happiness.

"I have to reply," said I, excitedly, "that he is of more value to me than to you, Monsieur."

"*Hé!* Well, then, what do you mean to do with him? Make a slave of him?"

"That lies with God, sir."

If a lion can grin I know now what he would look like. However, Monsieur de Frontenac began to grumble and rumble and shake his head, saying that I meant to turn my prisoner into a *coureur-de-bois* to fetch furs for me; and that between this Englishman and my father and me, both he and the King were like to be ruined.

But now his face had subtly altered; he looked strangely at me; and into his features there came a sadness which I never before had seen there.

He remained silent for a while; then took both my hands between his own, regarding me intently:

"Madame," he said, "I have always understood that both men and women of your race fear God alone. Also that they never lie though they may die for it. That is true, is it not?"

"Yes, sir, it is true."

"Then—I ask you a question. And already accept

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your answer. . . . Did you know my son, François Louis, Vicomte de Frontenac?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Did you—see him—die?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Do you know who slew him?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Was my—only son—slain honourably in fair fight?"

"In fair combat—honourably, loyally—by Sir Harry Quarles who in this hour is your prisoner. . . ."

Tears blinded me, and my voice trembled so that I could not speak—for, under my very eyes this man was withering and turning gray; and the fire had gone from his eyes, and his wrinkled hands were quivering in mine.

"Well," he said, "God give you happiness. . . . I have had little—save in battle. . . . Those were gay battles in Italy when I was young. . . . A colonel at twenty-one, Madame. . . . Four wounds; and an arm broken at Orbitello. . . . And *maréchal-de-camp* at twenty-six. . . . But, in love—" he slowly shook his head—"no; not happy. . . . Madame my wife was a beauty. Have you seen her portrait as Minerva? . . . Beautiful and spirited. . . . Our trouble, possibly; for I also have a spirited way with me—they say. . . ." A bleak smile touched his eyes.

Then he kissed my hands; and suddenly I began to cry, and bowed my head so that it rested against his shoulder among the scented ribbons and knots of lace.

After a little he put his hand under my chin and lifted my face and kissed me on both cheeks; and I saw the old sparkle come into his eyes and the leonine grimness melt to a smile as charming as a boy's.

"Always," said he, "you have had of me what you chose to obtain. Therefore, take your Englishman and do to him the mischief you already are devising. . . ."

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"What mischief, Monsieur?" I asked, smiling through my tears.

"Madame, you are widowed since yesterday! Therein lies sufficient mischief to undo the world!"

Monsieur de Frontenac laughed. He was himself again. He patted my cheeks, my hands; he stroked and twisted his grizzled mustache till it pointed proudly to Heaven.

"Madame," said he, "I go to the Recollet Fathers where is neither whining treachery nor impertinent pride, and where a poor soul may be shriven and make its peace with God. . . . Madame, I am given to understand that your Englishman is impatient to pay his respects to you."

Through me passed a heavenly thrill that robbed me of breath and speech.

"Which being the case," said he, a-grinning, "you may expect him here. And, Madame, I advise you to make as quick work of him as did I of Milord Sir Phips!"

"Y-yes, sir," I stammered, "—if it be God's will. . . ."

He began to laugh, saying that he found my candour adorable and that no living man could endure the battery of my gray eyes. Then he asked me what gift I desired in memory of him.

At that I drew from my bosom the little dagger and offered it to him in silence.

He could see how painful was the hot blush that burned my cheeks; and he took the little dagger very gravely.

Then I said to him that if he would give me his friendship I desired nothing else.

Whereupon he took me by the chin and kissed my forehead and both cheeks.

"More tyranny," he complained, "for now you take me prisoner, too, who must ever do your bidding. . . . Say to your father that I am gone to the Recollets, but that he is to sup with me here at the Château. . . . As, also,

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are you, Madame, and Madame d'Aloste. . . ." He waited, watching my face, then with a gesture of gay despair—"Oh, certainly—your Englishman, also!—but I am in such terror of you both that I shall not taste a mouthful. . . ."

He was gone. I stood alone under the great lustre.

There was a marble fireplace and a fire burning in it, and near it a love-seat of gilded wood and violet damask.

As I walked toward it, the door of the salon opened, and a servant in the Governor's livery announced Monsieur le Comte d'Aulone and Monsieur le Capitaine de vesseau, Sir Harry Quarles.

Mary Mother, my heart was beating so violently that I had scarce strength to set one foot before the other; and, indeed, I think I must have fallen had not my father raised me from my low curtsy with both his hands.

I looked at them in a blind sort of way and felt my lips stirring with the words convention prompts, but heard no voice.

Then my father said to me that he was very happy and very greatly honoured to find in Sir Harry Quarles so agreeable a friend and comrade, and that he was confident that I also would learn to value such a friendship.

Milord bowed very gracefully and murmured something amiable which I scarcely heard for the tumult and confusion in my mind and breast.

I said to them that our Governor expected them to supper, and they both laughed and looked at each other's apparel, and laughed again.

"Messieurs," said I, "while you are laughing, pray glance at me in my prison garb, for I also am invited to sup with our gorgeous Governor, and I think it will be a banquet of very vagabonds."

"Not you, Roussette," said my father, "for Madame de

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Champigny sends you a brand new gown which was commanded for her daughter."

"The child will cry her eyes out!" said I, shaking my head.

"No," said my father with his engaging laugh, "for I paid her with five silver fox pelts—which the Governor assures me is four more than is sufficient to hang me from Diamond Rock."

Milord was laughing like a school lad who connives at mischief; and I did not feel very greatly frightened.

"Well," said my father, drawing me to him and patting my cheek, "Sir Harry and I are not likely to shame you, for our Governor has kindly offered us a choice of very fine apparel which the merchants of the Lower Town have lodged in the Seminary vaults for safety—"

He turned to milord and added: "So, being vain, I shall go now and examine all this finery—"

He kissed my hair lightly; released me; bowed with perfect grace to me; to Sir Harry.

There was a moment's hesitation as these two men's eyes met; then, with the same impulse, they clasped hands in silence.

When my father had gone, I turned and took a step or two toward God knows where; then stopped and looked upon milord; and he upon me.

So, presently, I gave him my hand, and he led me to the love-seat which stood near the fire; and here he seated me, and took his place beside me.

"Well," said I, striving to smile, "here are we two wanderers once more together; and what God means to do with us He only knows. . . . Are you in health, milord?"

"And you, Michelle?"

I thanked him.

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My heart was beating wildly because, in his eyes, I had discovered that he was still in love with me. If he had read mine I knew not, so presently I lifted my eyes so that he also might discover everything.

Then he took my hands against his lips, and we sat so a little while in heavenly silence.

A burning log broke off and fell softly flaming.

I said: "You know I have no dowry, milord."

"Did I ask you when we were aboard the ship?"

"No, milord. Nor did you even believe I could bring you that with which God endowed me."

He was silent.

"Nevertheless," said I, "I bring you chastity and health, and love undying; and perfect courage to endure with you all things, allwheres, always to the end. . . . And so plight myself if you desire me."

He bent and kissed my hands: "And so I plight my faith," he said in a low voice.

I said faintly: "If we are plighted—you may take my lips, milord. . . ."

And was in his arms at last.

Mary Mother, what is to be our destiny I do not know.

For here we be in this new Western World together, I at twenty-two, he but few years older.

He has no king, no country; nor have I. Only this vast Western World we have, and desire no more of kings or of that Old World which proved unkind.

He thinks that perhaps the Dutch King may restore to him the lands which the Stuart confiscated. God knows.

But Aulone and Maniscamp are lost to us forever; and I do not think that the Dutch King who, they say, is both avaricious and bilious, ever will give back Quarleswood to milord.

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So this, then, is become our purpose—that, with my father's help, we clear a farm. Somewhere. And there, from the beginning, build for those children which we both desire. And so live our lives together—of kings and tyrants unafraid, free, confident, self-reliant, and “Fearing God alone.”

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THE END

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